Myths of Modern Education

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Abstract

My focus is on assessment criteria of language proficiency in community college education. To demand clear writing is an application of scientism; it seeks to keep separate the fact/value distinction of positivism. This dangerously undermines the democratizing possibilities of education, since clear writing, taken to its extreme, is ultimately anonymous and dehumanizing. The active student-as-citizen is, therefore, subsumed under the neoliberal dictate of the passive student-as-consumer. The process of language acquisition is reduced to a fictitious act of knowledge transmission and regurgitation, and, therefore, those subversive aspects of language learning, such as creativity and critical inquiry, are undermined. An initial overview of the tenets of modernity will provide a conceptual framework for this examination.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE TYRANNY OF PROGRESS

"Progress and Doom are two sides of the same medal . . . both are articles of superstition, not of faith" (Hannah Arendt, 1973, p. vii).

“In every new venture, there must be a vision of the future, a vision which enables the pioneer to project his thoughts and ideals beyond the arduous first steps. Where goals are clear and high, progress is sure and sound” (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 32).

The Tenets of Modernity

On a bright cold morning in December 1962, a little over 4 weeks after John F. Kennedy proved victorious in the Cuban Missile Crisis and less than 3 years before Ontario's first community college opened its doors, comrades of the Soviet Republic woke to read in *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the official newspaper of the Ministry of Defense, a headline that spoke of a glorious testament to progress. For the first time in the history of mankind, an interstellar transmission was sent from the Evpatoria Observatory in Crimea towards the planet Venus. In Morse code, the goddess of love, sex, and fertility received the words MIR LENIN SSSR: WORLD LENIN USSR (Kotenikov Institute of Radio Engineering and Electronics of the Russian Astronomical Society, 2014). Perhaps after the failure of the recent launch of Venera 2, a space probe that exploded before sending any data, scientists hoped to make contact with any sentient beings living under the clouds of sulfuric acid. But it made no matter. The feat was a test of the observatory's capabilities to find the astronomical unit, the distance from the Earth to the Sun first estimated by Archimedes (2002), but also a symbolic act performed not for the inhabitants of Venus, but fellow cold warriors across the Iron Curtain. Although the

Soviets were secretive,

> this boundary line bristling with barbed wire runs through the psyche of modern man . . . to apostrophize the capitalism of the one and the communism of the other as the very devil, so as to fascinate the outward eye and prevent it from looking within. (Jung, 2010, pp. 36-37)

It is appropriate that the first interstellar words were meant to be listened to across the Iron Curtain by members of the human race, since the history of space exploration is deeply aligned with the history of two competing superpowers fighting not only for political, military, and industrial supremacy, but also the hearts and minds of the earth's own sentient creatures. Their weapons were Capitalism and Communism, rival worldviews vying to dominate the other, desperate to prove that history was on its side, that its piety of inevitable progress would lead to Utopia more quickly than the other.

But all this may be myth. The story of Evpatoria's Morse message is absent from NASA's official history of the Soviet space program, and the only source documenting its existence comes from the Russian Astronomical Society. Even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, some adaptive preference formation may have been necessary to revise the historical record, to subtly shift the means to achieve the veneer of inevitable outcomes, to maintain the Society's conception of its historical progress. Even Alexander L. Zaitsev (2011a), Chief Scientist of the Institute of Radio Engineering and Electronics at the Russian Academy of Sciences, makes no mention of the Morse message in his own history of *Messaging to Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (METI)*. He awards the honour of "first deliberate interstellar radio message" to Arecibo, transmitted in 1974 from Puerto Rico and created by Americans Frank Drake and Carl Sagan (Zaitsev, 2011a, p. 400).

Aimed at globular star cluster M13 25,000 light years away, the message in binary code is divided into several sections, meant to be read from the top down. If extraterrestrials will ever receive it, the first disclosures of humanity they will collect, and by implication our most cherished disclosures, will be the numbers 1-10 and the atomic numbers of DNA. After this, 30 pixels graphically arrange our human form (Sagan, 1980, p. 290). We stand at the centre of our world and the solar system, but we are first made of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and phosphorus, those things that outlive us and give no qualities of humanity's social condition. This message says nothing of our individual agencies, our irrational desires, our need for love, and our all-too-human realization that we die.

As we are increasingly defining ourselves not only as global citizens, but also "citizens of the universe" (Harrison, 2011, p. 502), investigating the content of interstellar messaging since Arecibo will help to view ourselves from the outside in. Like Hannah Arendt (1998) in her work *The Human Condition*, I wish to find the Archimedean position, to see humans as objects, rather than subjects, as sentient beings from another world would perceive. The history of METI provides a ready-made Rorschach Test to at least try to answer the deepest questions we can ask ourselves in our contemporary epoch. In a time of soft relativism, of decentredness and fragmentation, let us challenge ourselves to make concrete those tenets which still unite us. What is the shared condition of modern humanity? What values do we hold which define us as modern rather than premodern, values held so deeply we keep too abstracted and ethereal to be questioned?

In the field of education, this philosophical investigation is important because teaching without awareness is a form of indoctrination. As political theorist Margaret

Canovan (1974) warns, "It is all too common for men to believe earnestly in doctrines which almost all their everyday experience contradicts" (p. 53).[1] These covert tenets of modernity are important to recognize, to come to terms with, or to reject entirely, because they are the meta-values of education. To pass them on without awareness undermines many overt tenets most of us in the Eurocentric West hold dear to us, such as liberty, free inquiry, and critical thinking, which we then attempt, in the mandate of globalization, to persuade other societies to adopt. These covert tenets may feel to us universal, principles so deeply rooted in the conceptualization of the modern Self that we fail to realize their influence. They become the uncontested axioms of educational policy. They tell us what education is *for*, the ultimate societal aims of our institutions of learning. But we forget that they are constructions, values which we have formed in history, and these values are deeply reflected in particular social, cultural, and political conditions of the recent past, such as the world wars, the Cold War, globalization, the supremacy of capitalism, and most profoundly in our constructions of time and history. We must interrogate these values in order to make them relevant to us, to keep them current. If we do not hold them up to the mirror of reality, they can become archaic, left to petrify like material once organic, and, as a result, may no longer reflect our new social paradigms. If so, they must be abandoned or else we betray the necessity of critical inquiry we profess to hold central to secular education. If not, we are engaged in religious instruction, merely indoctrinating the secular theologies of our time. This is the central claim of this thesis.

After the transmission of the Arecibo message, METI researchers at NASA had quickly realized the communicative problems in potential transhuman discourse.

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[1] Many sources I will reference were published around 1945-1975, and therefore use the terms *man* and *men* to refer to humanity as a singular entity. I will do so as well for consistency's sake. I do not wish to imply any polemic regarding identity politics.

Transmitting binary code to signify mathematical instructions is relatively easy when compared to the task of engaging in deeper content. To express qualities of ourselves beyond our DNA code requires the recognition that a more complex language must be adopted. However, any basic assumptions we can make about sentient beings, such as their possession of analytical and problem-solving skills, must involve the inclusion of *culture*. If we assume extraterrestrials have mastery over their natural environment, which is an assumption of a necessary condition for technological advancement, then their cognitive abilities, like ours, will have been formed by artificial, and, therefore, predominantly cultural, stimuli. John W. Traphagen (2014), professor of religious studies, reminds us that "culture is the primary lens through which humans acquire sensory data and organize those data into useful patterns and systems" (p. 164). While there may be truly universal maxims (e.g., altruism, pain, and gratitude), they are communicated through culture. Therefore, messaging structurally inhabits a cultural context.

Although humankind is culturally diverse, in METI literature many thinkers express a need to speak for all humankind by singular representation, rather than allow a free-for-all multiplicity of contrasting perspectives. In his analysis of ideology, Pierre Bourdieu (2003) provides a framework for understanding that even within a culture of heterodoxy, there are tacit beliefs lurking beneath, a hegemony of tenets that is unquestioned precisely because it remains unquestioned. He says,

> In class societies . . . the drawing of the line between the field of opinion, of that which is explicitly questioned, and the field of *doxa*, of that which is beyond questions and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in

> accord with social convention, is itself a fundamental objective at stake in that form of class struggle, which is the struggle for the imposition of the dominant systems of classification. (p. 169)

If ideology is a contingent fact established as necessity, then the *doxa* is similar to Friedrich Engels' "false consciousness" whereby illusory motives guide the thought process of the proletariat (Pines, 1993, p. 2). Louis Althusser (2014) expands Marx's definition of a repressive status apparatus to include "ideological state apparatuses" which hold a hegemony over the oppressed classes (p. 243). He cites the Church and the School as one of several arbiters of these apparatuses, especially the latter, since it is so effective that most would think of this institution as natural and neutral, purged of any ideology (p. 251). Therefore, many political theorists have argued that the division between autonomous and shared knowledge is much more blurred and indistinct than we would like to believe. Individual experience is "organized and constructed (re-collected) within the framework of an assumed, collectivized logic, which in many cases may be accepted as consisting of unequivocal maxims of human experience" (Traphagen, 2014, p. 166).

Dissenters have raised their concerns, but METI scholarship has predominantly focused on finding the common ground among competing conceptions of humanity so that this singular ideology, or collectivized logic, may be transmitted to extraterrestrials. Therefore, attempts to create a coherent message offer us a practical application of the theoretical frameworks offered by Bourdieu, Engels, Marx, and Althusser. After the dissolution of the USSR, the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA; 2007) published a declaration of principles to establish a general agreement on interstellar

transmission to extraterrestrials. Decisions to send messages should be made by "an appropriate international body, broadly representative of Humankind . . . [and] the content of such a message should be developed through an appropriate international process, reflecting a broad consensus . . . [of the] interests and well-being of Humankind" (IAA, 2007, p. 4). In fact, Michael A. G. Michaud (2003), former chairperson at IAA, argues that reflecting diversity may be "bad policy" because it may inhibit "rational dialogue" with extraterrestrials (p. 131). Kathryn Denning (2011) argues that METI is a "technologically mediated manifestation of our drive to represent ourselves" (p. 239). While the content of earlier transmissions, such as the Arecibo message, was decided by small groups of experts, NASA created the *Earth Speaks* project in 2009 to encourage global discussion on future messaging. Psychological researchers have performed textual analyses of 995 submissions to ascertain patterns of cultural identification. The largest word concepts were *We* and *Earth*, which were represented "at a rate that is more than eleven times and seventy-three times respectively more frequent than the base frequency for these word concepts as found in the British National Corpus" (Lower, Vakoch, Clearwater, Niles, & Scanlin, 2011, p. 345). The largest message-theme was the sentence, *We are humans of the planet Earth* (Lower et al., 2011, p. 344). Researchers concluded that the *Earth Speaks* project serves as an assessment of "species-level self-identification" and an expression of "our common identity as human beings" (Lower et al., 2011, p. 351).

Implicit in this messaging is the assumption that alien culture will be culturally unified (like our attempts at transmission), which suggests that our conception of progress, or cultural evolution, leads inexorably towards homogeneity. John W.

Traphagen (2014) asserts that this assumption "derives from human, and particularly Western, perspectives that reflect a teleological notion of cultural evolution in which there is a universal outcome to processes of cultural change" (p. 169). In the postmodern 21st century, we experience the currents of cultural and identity multiplicity, diversification, and fragmentation, but there are compelling arguments that we still accept as *doxa* that all cultures will eventually coalesce into a unified monoculture. Take the creed of globalization, for instance. Chris Hedges (2009a) argues that the corporate oligarchy in the United States uses this term as a means to engage in a form of neo-feudalism, since in a global marketplace the American underclass must compete with sweat shop workers in Bangladesh or prison labour in China. Other political theorists and economists have made similar claims that economic globalization is a unifying force under the veneer of diversity. Thomas Piketty (2014), in his monumental work *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, provides breathtaking empirical evidence that there are "major defects" in the theoretical belief that investing in poorer countries abroad should lead to "convergence of rich and poor countries and an eventual reduction of inequalities through market forces and competition" (p. 69). His data show that the tyranny of enforced market capitalism is an ideology which hides the reality of financial imperialism. Benjamin R. Barber (2001) terms Western consumerism as the imposition of one cultural value over another, a form of "neo-colonialism" (p. xvi). Therefore, my first premise regarding the tenets of modernity is the existence of certain homogenous meta-values which supercede any diverse cultural specificities. As I outline the remaining meta-values, I hope they will not prove too controversial, because as *doxa*, they are principles we should find so benign they go unnoticed and unquestioned.

The second tenet of modernity is the centrality of scientific and technological advancement. A fundamental rationale behind METI, and, in fact, the entire global space program, is to make known the material achievements of humankind, especially our mastery over the natural world. Alexander L. Zaitsev (2011b) argues that transmission is "a vital and natural need of a highly developed civilization," and isolationism may be a cause of the extinction of a civilization (p. 2). Note his use of the word *natural*. Paradoxically, what is natural for advanced humankind is to celebrate its capability to impose artificial culture and civilization onto nature. And who better to be the messengers than our scientists, the arbiters of artificiality whose task is to rationally know the natural world--and ultimately control it? Results from a survey in 2007 reveal that the American public believes scientists would make the best extraterrestrial communicators and "good-will ambassadors" with the military, private industry, religious leaders, and government, respectively, trailing behind (Harrison, 2011, p. 506).

The third tenet of modernity is the increasing centrality of economics as the primary means of human organization. I state *increasing* as a caveat for modernity is a historical phenomenon, and as such, is victim to various competing interpretations for which it stands. Enlightenment philosophy viewed liberalism as deeply imbued with moral import; economic progress required the intervention of moral precepts from the social and political realms. Karl Polanyi (2001) argues that with the rise of international finance in the 19th century, classic liberalism became infected with a totalizing economic mindset now celebrated in contemporary neoliberalism. The self-regulating market system became a "utopian endeavor" invested with "mythical faculties" (Polanyi, 2001, p. 31), yet liberalism failed to recognize its role in precipitating the greatest crisis the world

had ever known: the First World War. Thus, a secular theology of progress made liberalism blind to its own corruption of its original tenets. This corruption required adaptive preference formation, a historical revisionism to maintain the myth of progress based solely on economic tenets. The philosophy of Adam Smith (2000/2002) provides an apt example. While "modern ideologists of the market continue to claim Smith as a prophet of ultra-liberalism" (McNally, 1993, p. 44), Polanyi (2001) claims that "no misreading of the past ever proved more prophetic of the future" (p. 43). He reminds us that notions of progress before the rise of international finance were relegated to the realms of political, intellectual, and spiritual (p. 47). David McNally (1993) argues that Smith scholarship bifurcated around in the early 19th century between those who justified poor working conditions and living standards among labour as inevitable, and those who criticized these inhumane outcomes of the market system (p. 43). He charges the former interpretation, held by free market ideologues, such as Hayek, as "a wholesale vulgarization of Smith's thought" (p. 45). Smith never intended for his ideas to simply trump currently held liberalist ethics; a deep, unresolved tension permeates all of his works, including *The Wealth of Nations* (2000) and *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2002), between morality and market behaviour. Progress was never to be defined as basely as the right to pursue unhindered economic transactions; it was to be achieved by tempering such forces by participatory democracy.

This revisionism of Smith is typical of neoliberal ahistoricism, which aims for the total "erasure of memory" (as cited in Klein, 2008, p. 557). Like other theologies, neoliberalism desires "unattainable purity, a clean slate on which to build a re-engineered model society" (Klein, 2008, p. 24). A state of pure capitalism, devoid of human

interferences, requires the total absence of governmental regulation, which is justified by its naturalness. Klein argues, "The core of such sacred Chicago teachings was that the economic forces of supply, demand, inflation and unemployment were like the forces of nature, fixed and unchanging" (p. 58). Milton Friedman's negative freedom is as illusory and utopian as Marxism, yet it borrows heavily from the frontier psyche of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, making it as American as apple pie. Therefore, modernity and neoliberalism share precepts, such as Man as an economic creature, but neoliberalism may be interpreted as a historical mutation of modernity. Although difficult to date, the mainstream acceptance of anti-Keynesian economic policies of the Chicago School as a response to the 1970s oil crisis and the application of these policies in Reagan and Thatcher of the 1980s may be broadly accepted as a turning point in mainstream conceptions of modernity, when neoliberalism took over ideological hegemony in our contemporary culture.

In neoliberal economic theory, humankind is essentially predictive and, therefore, shares conditioned behaviours, such as the maxim that individuals respond to incentives. Therefore, humans may be calculated as rational commodities, or human capital. Tal Gilead (2012) posits that human capital theory rests on two assumptions: that preferences are stable, and that preferences are certain (p. 119). Like Ivan Pavlov's dog or B. F. Skinner's conditioning chamber, these maxims of human behaviour take as a given that free will is ultimately illusory, or at least not as totalizing as we would believe. As H. MacCartney (April 18, 2014), professor of economics at Duke University, admits, his discipline is a social science that desires to study humans scientifically (personal communication). Neoliberal economics is related to scientific organization by treating

individuals as objects of processes rather than autonomous beings. While both communism and capitalism are "materialist Utopias offering rival versions of an earthly paradise" (Wright, 2004, p. 124), they both betray Man as an economic creature (Norris, 2011, p. 21). The cold warriors on both sides of the Space Race would have admitted this common ground, although their aspirations of human organization were radically opposing. After the collapse of the USSR, capitalism became the ipso facto model for the ideal political order, and with that were imbued those political values we hold dear to us in the West, including democracy, negative freedom, and the rise of the nation-state (since communism is ultimately a universalist worldview). We think of concepts of freedom and capitalism as inevitable in the material progress of humankind. Albert A. Harrison (2014), who researches the societal dimensions of METI, recently argued that "long-lived societies are democratic, peaceful, and enduring, [while] self-serving, authoritarian, and aggressive societies inevitably collapse" (p. 184). By this reasoning, politics becomes the slave to economics, since the best means for governing a society can be found in a model of rational human behaviour which purports to be universal, predictive, and value-neutral. All modes of thinking become subsumed by scientific, positivist thought or else deemed meaningless. An example would be logical positivism and language. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (2002) reject the positivist commodification of language:

> If the only obstacles were those arising from the oblivious instrumentalization of science, thought about social questions could at least attach itself to tendencies opposed to official science. Those tendencies, too, however, are caught up in the

> general process of production. They have changed no less than the ideology they attacked. (p. xv)

As a result, thought is deprived "of the conceptual language of opposition" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. xv) and, thus, in the modern age "the hygienic factory is bought with the melting down of all cultural entities in the gigantic crucible" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. xvii). If moral judgments find no place in positivist, value-neutral, objective discourse, then humans are robbed of the tools to dissent. I will come back to this point later.

The fourth tenet of modernity is the belief in a historical and conceptual schism between premodernity and modernity. Our understanding of scientific, technological, and economic advancement can only be maintained if there existed a time and place in which these systems were not yet advanced. Our core identity as moderns is predicated on the assumption that we are no longer premodern. In his work *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour (1993) makes a similar claim: "The modern passage of time is nothing but a particular form of historicity. Where do we get the idea of time that passes? From the modern Constitution itself" (p. 68). Within this belief are fundamental conceptions of linear time and progress.

To summarize, I postulate these four tenets as the meta-values of modernity: (a) the existence of certain homogenous meta-values which supercede any diverse cultural specificities, (b) the centrality of scientific and technological advancement, (c) the increasing centrality of economics as the primary means of human organization, and (d) the belief in a historical and conceptual schism between premodernity and modernity. Although I have introduced them using the Rorshach Test of extraterrestrial

communication as a starting point, there has been a broad consensus among many thinkers in various disciplines since the early 19th century that these are the fundamental conditions of modernity. I will refer to these thinkers throughout this thesis, including: Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, and Thomas Piketty (in economics); Eric Voegelin, Sheldon Wolin, Chris Hedges, and Noam Chomsky (in politics); W. V. O. Quine, Hilary Putnam, Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, and Bruno Latour (in the history and philosophy of science); Auguste Comte, Max Weber, and Zygmunt Bauman (in sociology); Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung (in psychology); Michael W. Apple, Gert Biesta, Kenneth Howe, and Diane Ravitch (in education); Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and Terry Eagleton (in literature); and critical theorists of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse (in sociology).

Before moving further, I wish to explicitly state my commitments to modernity, critical theory, and postmodernity. My overall concern is to essentially save modernity from itself as it is misappropriated in educational policy. Where once modernity turned its critical gaze outward towards theocracy and the divine right of kings, now more than ever it must turn inwards to critique its own presuppositions and reveal its protean and historically-changing tenets. Reason is a sacred privilege of the human condition, yet the empty rhetoric of science, technology, and economics in educational policy reveals presuppositions of modernity that rather than encourage the application of modernity's commitment to critique, become the means by which thoughtfulness is discouraged. Modernity in educational policy is unreason disguised as reason, theology sanctified by the language of the secular. While schools of thought differ in terms of the relationship between critical theory and postmodernism, I wish to make no distinction between the

two conceptual, historical modes of thought. I will borrow from both disciplines as ammunition against the misappropriation of modernity in our contemporary culture.

Of all the thinkers previously mentioned, I am most indebted to the political thought of Hannah Arendt (1998), who proposes in her work *The Human Condition* "nothing more than to think what we are doing" (p. 5). More deeply than any other theorist, Arendt (1998) stresses the moral imperative for us not only to think, but to act in our world, and puts front and centre the moral consequences of the thoughtlessness which gives rise to the individual state of alienation and loneliness. A stark reminder of this aspect of the modern condition is reflected in the *Earth Speaks* messages: many submissions were simply asking for help (Lower et al., 2011, p. 342). Researchers concluded that there is a widespread hope that those nonhuman creatures thousands of light years in the distance will "provide [us] with the knowledge necessary to overcome the contemporary global climate of human-caused fear, loneliness, and violence" (Lower et al., 2011, p. 351). It is a sad paradox that our attempts to reach the Archimedean point and make contact with extraterrestrials may deflate our core values of cultural advancement. Contact may reveal how primitive we are in relation to the sentient Other. In an age where science, technology, and economics provide the tools to improve our material conditions, we also use these to build gas chambers and weapons of mass destruction, thereby potentially destroying what we hold most precious to us. As the *Earth Speaks* analysis illustrates, we are still living in an "age of anxiety," a term coined by W. H. Auden (1947) over 60 years ago. Loneliness is a chief characteristic of our times, and we have a moral dictate to investigate its causes or risk betraying the necessity of critical inquiry we profess to embrace as central to modern education. Can we place at

least some blame on the very utopian values by which we unquestionably define ourselves? Do our conceptions of time, history, and progress provide clues? Are these conceptions so rooted in our identity as moderns that they have become theologies, even in our allegedly secular existences?

The Edifice of Time

Classical antiquity, the progenitor of modern Western civilization, had a very different conception of time. It was cyclical. Nature lay outside the realm of the gods, and man came into being in nature. Therefore, an individual is remembered because he interrupts, in the words of Arendt (1958), this "eternal quiet of being-forever" (p. 572), breaking the bounds of immortality and achieving fame precisely by his own mortality, "the hallmark of human existence" (p. 571). Man is the only being who can move beyond the cyclical processes of life in a rectilinear movement, like a line puncturing a circle. This worldview puts the individual at its centre; he is not victim to the dictates of his society, or the inevitability of historical change. He is the agent for historical change, not its process. Society is not an artifice in opposition to nature. By contrast, our modern worldview based on Cartesian dualism (despite Heidegger's (2010) phenomenological ontology and the postmodernist project) divides man, the subject, from nature, the object.

Arendt (1958) reminds us that this modern worldview is painfully outdated, though. Even in 1958 she recognized the heresy of adopting this rhetoric of scientism in the face of 20th century insight. The 19th century concept of "absolute objectivity and precision of the natural sciences is today a thing of the past" (Arendt, 1958, p. 577). Arendt (1958) attributes the discovery that the earth revolves around the sun as the threshold of the modern world, since this betrays the observation of sense experience (p.

257). Galileo was the first modern, and the telescope was the first modern technology. However, a recognition of this subjectivism may lead one to perhaps feel "imprisoned in a non-world of meaningless sensations that no reality and no truth can penetrate" (Arendt, 1958, p. 584). Therefore, the Enlightenment project, which affirms the objectivity of man's senses and the confidence that man can ultimately know and thereby control the objects of nature, coincides and makes strange bedfellows with this inherent subjectivity in modern science. Yet, we often choose to abide by the myths of rationality, positivism, and objectivity found in the Enlightenment without recognizing them as such, and most insidiously these myths encroach into our conception of historical and social change. Like our belief that Ideas evolve and lead us towards more understanding of the world, by implication we assume that society follows the same trajectory. Where does this value find its genesis? What conditions create the fiction of man's self-proclaimed god-like status as master of Nature, but also impotent to the processes of the collective, reified Man? Why do we believe we are conditioned by history, hatched and decanted by historical forces beyond our reach, like the citizens of the World State in the dystopian utopia *Brave New World*?

Perhaps it was Plato, the father of Western philosophical writing. He was "the first to design a blueprint for the making of political bodies [and] has remained the inspiration for all later utopias" (Arendt, 1998, p. 227). He set down rules for the perfection of society. In his famous analogy, we have been imprisoned in a cave since childhood, and it is the duty of learned men to enlighten, rather than corrupt, the minds of youth, to show them the shadows made by the fire and ultimately the sunlight outside. In Plato's world, a perfect circle can be imagined, while representations of circles (the

shadows) are degraded copies of the perfect form. Therefore, those who can recognize the true Forms must be the elite who rule over others, in a relationship derived from the master and slave (Arendt, 1998, p. 224). For Arendt (1998),

> the Platonic identification of knowledge with command and rulership and of action with obedience and execution overruled all earlier experiences and articulations in the political realm and became authoritative for the whole tradition of political thought, even after the roots of experience from which Plato derived his concepts had long been forgotten. (p. 225)

With the gradual dissolution of Rome, the belief in a material immortality manifested in objects, including most of all in the corporeal public realm which preserves the memory of man's actions, became increasingly challenged by the emergence of Judaeo-Christian doctrine (Canovan, 1974, p. 84). Norman F. Cantor (1994) argues that for Plato, salvation lay in man's ability to know the eternal Idea, but for the Jewish people, their God was an interlocutor of history:

> In the static Greek view of the universe, perfect forms had always existed and would always exist, so real change was not possible. In the Hebrew view, on the other hand, God existed before the world began (He created it), but He acts in our lives through history. God set up a drama in which men participate; He directs the course of human history. (p. 23)

Eschatology, the theology of finality, a derivation of the ancient Greek word *eschaton* meaning end time, became an increasingly obsessive occupation in Hebrew scholarship, especially after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. (Cantor, 1994, p. 24). The ancient Jewish people found solace in perpetual reform and the gradual

perfection of human society in history. There was not only a material dimension to this; they ascribed to a moral attitude that as the Chosen People, servants of God's ultimate plan, "an unjust situation would be made just" for them but also for all of humankind (Cantor, 1994, p. 24). Norman Cohn (1961) argues that the earliest traces of supranational totalitarianism find their genesis in the millenarian thinking of this attitude. He says, "At least since the days of the prophets they had been convinced that Yahweh was no mere national god, however powerful, but the one and only God, the omnipotent Lord of History who controlled the destinies of all nations" (p. 1).

In Western Christendom, we must remind ourselves that so much orthodoxy we attribute as scriptural can, in fact, be attributed to the writings of the earliest Church Fathers. Saint Augustine's views on time, history, and progress lent credence to subsequent theological thought through the ages. To this he devotes the last three chapters of *City of God* (2003), a work somewhat of an inversion of Plato's *The Republic* (2007). While his work is squarely Neo-Platonist, it celebrates a gnostic, inward contemplation of God whereby one must turn away from the public realm. Most importantly, Augustine claims that since sin originated in history (as Original Sin after the Fall), "only through history do persons develop their full potential as true images of God" (Clark, 2005, p. 106). Millenarian and apocalyptic concerns run rampant in *City of God*. The crucible of Christian eschatology is the Incarnation of Christ, and since this is a unique historical event, so will all future events. Cantor (1994) argues,

> Augustine's affirmation of the Judaic linear historical concept (as against the Greek) has an enormous social impact. . . The primordial western cast of mind

> sees men marching toward a glorious future through the dregs of the present; belief in progress is the very heart of western thought. (p. 77)

The desire for perfection is distinctive--a quality of the Western mind. The Enlightenment heavily borrowed the eschatological worldview of early Judaism and Christianity and knowingly supplanted it onto the material conditions of human societies. In fact, the chief characteristic of rationality, a central tenet of Enlightenment thought, is the ability to make progress, to set a clear and specific future objective, and to sequentially and discretely move towards this objective (Fuller, 2007, p. 128). But what is deeply insidious about this displacement of progress from the mystical to the secular is we forget its conceptual inheritance. Augustine was concerned with the soul of Man, and his mission as a moral one. He would be probably horrified to see his message sanitized of its value judgments by the adoption of illusory objectivism, positivism, and neutrality. And it is dangerous to fail to recognize this mythic inheritance, what Max Weber (2006) calls "the ghost of dead religious beliefs" (p. 124), because it is too easy to position ourselves as the godhead.

Throughout the medieval period, though, there was a contradictory but accepted paradox in the nature of eschatological versus material or social time. Medieval Christians were devout in the conviction that the Church would one day become universal (Cantor, 1994, p. 26). However, historians have argued that to the medieval mind, material progress was anathema to this eschatological concern. Man may increase in his personal virtue, but “betterment of the whole world would have to await the Second Coming and the beginning of a new age” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 54). According to Augustine, Man had free will but only a limited capacity: enough to choose or reject

God's grace. Therefore, a conception of historical change as linear time was largely absent because God ultimately determines the path of mankind. William Manchester (1993) even asserts that the medieval mind did not perceive of material time as divided into past, present, and future, since corporeal life was quantified by the cyclical passing of seasons and annual religious holidays, for instance (p. 22). Although he may be stressing this point a bit too far, perhaps to contrast this conception to that of the Renaissance mind, it helps us to give pause and reflect upon a time when the technology of keeping time was never experienced apart from a local Easter calendar. Norman Cohn (1961) argues that beginning in the 11th century, those social mechanisms which "precluded any radical disorientation" of the peasant began to diminish with the emergence of institutional commerce (p. 18). Capitalism, albeit in a primitive form when compared to today, was still a modernizing force because it provided for the peasant at least fantasies of upward social mobility. The Third Estate (as the French revolutionaries later termed it) began to chip away at the stratified hierarchy of the feudal system.

Capitalism and the technological development it precipitated were the tools which facilitated the displacement of religious progress onto historical progress. Take the clock, for instance. Before around 1600, the English apprehended the regulation of time by hearing the bells of the local church that divided it into uneven hours (MacGregor, 2012, p. 219). A minute would have only been an abstract idea and never physically experienced, much like our understanding of nanoseconds today. By the mid-17th century, minute hands became standard in clocks. David Harvey (1989) argues that new perspectivism, illustrated in mechanical, discrete time, and the science of optics, influenced modernity's compression of time and space; it "provided an effective material

foundation for the Cartesian principles of rationality that became integrated into the Enlightenment project" (p. 245). He echoes Bourdieu's suggestion that "spatial and temporal experiences are primary vehicles for the coding and reproduction of social relations" (as cited in Harvey, 1989, p. 247), primarily the domination of the natural world, a necessary precondition of modern capitalism. There is a limit to the effective organization of people if nature remains out of control. Harvey elaborates,

> The economic conditions of the European Enlightenment contributed in no uncertain measure to the sense of common objectives. Increased competition between states and other economic units created pressure to rationalize and co-ordinate the space and time of economic activity . . . All economic units were caught up in a world of increasing competition in which the stakes were ultimately economic success. (p. 259)

By the 19th century, it is clear that technological revolutions, aided by capitalism, led to revolutions in thought. Neil MacGregor (2010) cites ship chronometers as an example of this partnership:

> The chronometer for the first time allowed absolutely accurate charting of the oceans, with all that implied for establishing safe and rapid shipping routes. It was another great step in the Enlightenment project of mapping -- and therefore controlling -- the world. (p. 597)

He further discusses the use of the chronometer in Darwin's HMS *Beagle* (and by proxy his theory of evolution) and the standardization of Greenwich Mean Time as establishing the objectivity of time. He says, "the measurement of time had been severed from the natural cycle of days and seasons" (MacGregor, 2010, p. 598).

It may seem sheer lunacy to question the objectivity of time, even if one traces the social historiography of its conception. To undermine its legitimacy may feel perhaps a marker of psychosis. However, because all cultures in all periods take as a given the universality and experience of time, it provides for us fertile ground to investigate how competing *conceptions* of time are influenced by their historical and social contexts. Time is the most common noun in the English language, with year placing third, and day placing fifth (Oxford University Press, 2014). It is, therefore, an ideal concept, in the words of Stephen Kern (2003), "to interpret how class structures, modes of production, patterns of diplomacy, or means of waging war were manifested historically in terms of changing experiences of time and space" (p. 4). In the modern age, it is useful to begin in the field of psychology, for it offers a perspective of lived time that is at odds with our rational self and collapses our built edifices between reason and insanity. The case of Daniel Paul Schreber is the most frequently cited in the history of psychoanalytic literature (as cited in Labbie & Uebel, 2010, p. 128). A German judge who suffered from dementia, Schreber (2000) believed he communicated directly with God by experiencing His nerves and rays, and wrote his experiences in his book *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* in 1884. What is most fascinating about his writing is that he adopts the lucidity of scientific discourse. He clearly desires to be legitimized by rational means, like the medieval apologists who desired to apply rationality to the unreason of faith to prove God's existence. However, Erin Labbie and Michael Uebel argue that Schreber's special role as divine receiver positions him as the antithesis of modernity, since he desires "not to fill traditional spiritual forms with a modern secular content" but spiritual forms with spiritual forms (p. 129). As medieval scholars, they position his experiences with the

premodern, and argue that the popularity of such texts by mentally ill persons are a means by which we can amuse ourselves by experiencing what we believe we are not:

> modernity contrasts itself to the barbarism (and innocence) and presumed illegitimacy of the Middle Ages. In this case the idealization of science asserts the supremacy of the technological progress of modernity over what is seen to be an archaic premodern culture. (Labbie & Uebel, 2010, p. 133)

Like the Savage paraded for the civilized in *Brave New World*, we take refuge in the conviction that we know better and feel secure in taking delight in Schreber's blurring of premodern and modern time. However, Freud (1973) found many temporal distortions in the fantasies of many of his patients, and even defined the dream state as "a process of fragmentation in which chronological relations in particular are neglected" (p. 252). Jung (1968), in his most accessible text written for the layperson, argued that neurotic phenomena are "no more than pathological exaggerations of normal occurrences" (p. 20). This questioning of our preconceptions of time is actually a trait in the art of modernism, experienced in many cultural forms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The unconscious took centre stage when we transitioned from what Lewis Mumford (1962) termed the age of confidence to the age of violence. Artistic expression reflected the crisis of representation in this period of cultural war with the old regime. The increasing prevalence of public time, due to the centralization of industry and government, created a rupture with private time (Kern, 2003, p. 34). Individuals would increasingly retreat into the sanctity of their own personal realm of subjectivity, perhaps in an attempt to be secure in at least knowing themselves in an age of such angst and tension. Scientific discoveries that undermined the preconceived markers of time's succession, such as Einstein's theory

of relativity, challenged the Newtonian paradigm and propelled cultural anxieties which were reflected in the literature of the period, such as works by Joyce and Proust (Kern, 2003, p. 19). Arendt (1973) famously argued that Nazism as a totalitarian movement was fundamentally modern, but it was also atavistic, primitive, and archaic, spouting rhetoric of the Fatherland and an image of the glorious pretechnological past, even appropriating eugenic theory, which was mildly outdated and unfashionable by the 1930s. Nazism was a contradiction of composite of myths "in opposition to the rational utilitarianism of Enlightenment thought" (Harvey, 1989, p. 277), but also a utopian movement of the inevitability of progress, touting claims of a Thousand Year Reich. The *Entartete Kunst* exhibition of 1937 attempted to show to the German *volk* how deeply the art of modernity reflected degeneration, a moving backwards in time rather than forwards. The Nazis sought to reclaim the past and fuse it to their version of the present and future.

After the horrors of the Second World War, cultural thought has been dominated by postmodernism, which threatens to undermine the presuppositions of linear time and the rational evolution of human society which many believe were catalysts for the loss of over 50 million lives. David Harvey (1989) characterizes this movement as "[f]ragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all universal or 'totalizing' discourses" (p. 9). Following the paradigms of early 20th century art, notions of cyclical and repetitive time in private life provided for the individual a "perpetual counterpoint to progress" which is "the compelling image of some stable university propensity" (Harvey, 1989, p. 202). Harvey uses the example of neo-classical economic rhetoric. To defer gratification is touted as a virtue in conservative thought, since it encourages fiscal autonomy and personal responsibility, while simultaneously debt is lauded as

characteristic of growth and prosperity (Harvey, 1989, p. 202). However, this unresolved, contradictory, and diverse conception of relative time is ultimately subsumed by the tendency to objectify time, even in our postmodern condition: “there is still a tendency to regard the differences as those of perception or interpretation of what should fundamentally be understood as a single, objective yardstick of time's ineluctable arrow of motion" (Harvey, 1989, p. 203). Like Kern (2003), Harvey recognizes that these objective qualities of time are not independent of material historical processes, such as the capitalist mode of production, which require faith in “the advance of knowledge (scientific, technical, administrative, bureaucratic, and rational” (Harvey, 1989, p. 204).

In education, we must not fail to recognize the material conditions which give rise to competing and dominant conceptions of time. This veneer of collective consensus disguises the edifice of cultural time. One of my central arguments in this thesis is that when a certain variety postmodernism is largely rejected in higher education, or at least only paid lip service, it can result in education as indoctrination. The meaning of postmodernism is notoriously difficult to pin down, but I am concerned here specifically with its allowance of epistemological subjectivity. Of course, modernity can strive for this as well, but modernity as it is conceptually framed in contemporary education is often an ossified version of itself, becoming dogmatic of certain axioms. Critical theory, which seeks to subvert the epistemological bases of modernist knowledge, is absent from educational discourse; and, therefore, the tenets of modernity, those meta-values of educational policy, are left unquestioned and remain as absolutes, myths that stand outside the topics of postmodernist inquiry. Only identity politics takes centre stage, such as issues of race, gender, and class. These are important discussions to have, but they are

not enough to question more fundamental axioms of human organization. For instance, to celebrate ethnic diversity does not necessarily lead one to undermine the claims of neo-classical economic theory. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the "boutique activism" (Hedges, 2011a, p. 8) of diversity and multiculturalism, for instance, adopts language that so many would accept at face value, and, therefore, is sanitized of the subversive (and most effective) qualities of postmodernism. The myths of modernity remain, especially our faith in scientific, technical, and economic advancement, for these myths act as superstructures which supersede the divisive particulars of identity politics. These superstructures insist upon our cultural constructions of objective, discrete, linear time. It seems sanitary to call students “human capital” since it takes as a given that our postproductivist economy is an inevitable outgrowth of social advancement, in which labour skills, manifested in the human, are the new machines of economic progress. But this has deep moral repercussions, which will be investigated in the next chapter. For now, we must interrogate the tyranny of progress in order to topple the conceptual foundations of what we believe is the social advancement of modernity.

Kuhn, Genocide, and the Collapse of Moral Progress

The most obvious objection to a critique of progress is to refer to the material benefits we enjoy by the cumulative processes of scientific innovation and technological application. It is a story we have heard since childhood: one discovery gave rise to another, knowledge compounded upon itself, and sequentially we have evolved from the depths of barbarity towards the enlightened Utopia. It is obviously better (for some) to live in the 21st century West than in any other period in history. At the turn of the 20th century, life expectancy in the developed nations of Britain and Germany was only

around 45 years (Hicks & Allen, 1999, p. 8). While material advancement due to scientific discovery seems the most apparent testament to human progress, Thomas Kuhn (2012), in his famous work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, provides a historiography of scientific thought which undermines the belief that scientific advancement consists of a series of discoveries that is unbroken, continuous, and cumulative. He argues that this narrative hides persistent anomalies that continue after each subsequent advance. His insistence upon these anomalies does not necessarily undermine the notion of progress, since there can be material improvement by a new scientific discovery, but rather this perspective that one paradigm may not in fact improve upon the one it displaces supports my critique of scientific progress. Scientific discovery moves in a clunky process of shifting paradigms. Facts do not accumulate without the acceptance of these facts in culture. For instance, one discovery leaves its own gaps in theory. The very framework of this new account of knowledge establishes parameters which become important for the theory. Therefore, what subsequent scientists desire to measure, and deem important to measure, is delineated by the existing theory. Essentially, we view the world *through* paradigms. We might accept this more easily in the field of art history, but what was so scandalous about his work when it was published was that he applied it to the story of scientific progress. Kuhn posits that we tend to resist paradigm shifting. For example, if counter-evidence falsifies a prediction, this new evidence will be disregarded in favour of explaining the counter-evidence using the preexisting paradigm; it is only when the old paradigm begins to continually break down do scientists resolve this crisis and substitute a new paradigm. This is necessary for engaging in what Kuhn terms "normal science" (p. 10), which he asserts is the beauty of

scientific experimentation. Preexisting structures of thought are necessary to engage in practical inquiry. I will argue against the encroachment of older paradigms of progress, such as the narrative of scientific advancement Kuhn seeks to undermine, when it is appropriated by nonscientific disciplines, such as education, English, history, and economics. I reject the *empty rhetoric* of science and those who abuse its semiotic weight and mistakenly believe its epistemological method self-evidently dominates other modes of thinking. Too often to the nonscientists, older paradigms become ossified as myths, and these myths must suffer the attacks of critical inquiry like anything else.

Karl Popper (1950), another philosopher of science, warns us that absolutist systems of epistemology contribute to a viewpoint that can lead to totalitarianism (p. viii). In fact, what demarcates science as scientific is not its claim to uncontested objectivity, but rather its ability to be falsified. Popper (1962) says, "A theory which is not refutable by any conceivable means is non-scientific. Irrefutability is not a virtue of a theory (as people often think) but a vice" (p. 36). Scientific inquiry must be antiauthoritarian, and like Arendt, he cites Plato's ideas of the utopian political community as progenitors of totalitarian thought (Popper, 1950, p. 86). There is nothing inherently sinister about utopias per se, but it can lead towards ahistorical thinking. If we do not accept Kuhn's (2012) claims, we are at risk of assuming that scientific judgments must trump the authority of their predecessors. Claims to knowledge, to know the world correctly and objectively, is deeply imbued with mastery, the will to dominate and control. Popper (1962) takes lessons from history to argue that the "authoritarian spirit" of this mode of thinking has disastrous consequences when it is transferred to political theory (p. 25). Asking for sources of knowledge which leave no room for error is a

dangerous path of inquiry; instead, he suggests we replace it with the question, "How can we organize our political institutions so that bad or incompetent rulers . . . cannot do too much damage?" (p. 25). Do not look for certainty because that is not scientific. However, as T. Norris (February 27, 2014) notes, Popper's attempt to tie Plato to totalitarianism is perhaps a bit too naive, and thus this attitude towards scientific method Kuhn might find problematic (personal communication).

Nevertheless, this insidious line of authoritarian thinking supports myth-making because if we assume that we are entirely shaped by history and society, and if we compound this with the assumption that time progresses inevitably towards advancement, then progress must destroy the meaningless and invalid past. History has nothing to teach us, then, and as tradition becomes a nasty word we take our lessons from the nonexistent future. As Latour (1993) argues,

> The moderns have a peculiar propensity for understanding time that passes as if it were really abolishing the past behind it. They all take themselves for Attila, in whose footsteps no grass grows back. They do not feel that they are removed from the Middle Ages by a certain number of centuries, but that they are separated by Copernican revolutions, epistemological breaks, epistemic ruptures so radical that nothing of that past survives in them -- nothing of that past ought to survive in them. (p. 68)

In an age without the comfort of God (since Enlightenment thought demands man to be master of nature), faith in progress allows us to reposition ourselves as central to the upward movement of temporality towards an earthly paradise created by Man. Progress becomes myth. As Latour elaborates, "The asymmetry between nature and culture then

becomes an asymmetry between past and future. The past was the confusion of things and men; the future is what will no longer confuse them" (p. 71). It is a myth that denies itself, though, an irrationality disguised as rationality, or what Herbert Marcuse (1966), when speaking of advanced industrial civilization, calls "the rational character of its irrationality" (p. 9). If progress is inevitable, then refutation must be irrational. If society rules the individual, then man has no place but to retreat into his private world of subjectivity.

Aspects of irrationality disguised as rationality include the myth of total mastery. In his work *One-dimensional Man*, Marcuse (1966) argues that too often scientific progress is used as a tool of domination. He examines the political consequences of contemporary analytic philosophy's obsession with universals, such as Mind, Will, and Self, which then become reified in society as more human than the autonomous, free-thinking individual. He says,

> this dissolution itself must be questioned -- not only on behalf of the philosopher, but on behalf of the ordinary people in whose life and discourse such dissolution takes place. It is not their own doing and their own saying; it happens to them and it violates them as they are compelled, by the 'circumstances', to identify their mind with the mental processes, their self with the roles and functions which they have to perform in their society. If philosophy does not comprehend these processes of translation and identification as societal processes . . . philosophy struggles only with the ghost of the substance which it wishes to de-mystify. (Marcuse, 1966, p. 204)

Marcuse stresses the need to translate those abstract nouns we anoint and capitalize as

proper such as Nation, Party, and Corporation, as no more than the sum of their parts (p. 206). They are mere abstractions of cultural and historical specificities. This is my argument against the semantic tyranny of concepts I have previously discussed such as Time, History, and Progress. A central concern for many critical theorists of the Frankfurt School is reification the rendering into the abstract, the pulling away of ideas from the historical conditions which initially produce them. The language of positivism which facilitates this reification becomes a totalizing discourse, an ideological pathology. I am reminded here of Heidegger's (2010) critique of Cartesian dualism: we believe that to know an object fully requires the division of the subject (the individual) from the object (the world), but Heidegger claims that there exists a more fundamental unity between the two in the form of Being which we have yet to come to terms with. Before we can ask questions like, What is man? and What is nature?, we are already presupposing we know what *is* is. Therefore, the language of positivism is insufficient to engage in this mode of ontological inquiry.

Reification renders the individual impotent and, therefore, lacking in autonomous freedom. To maintain the ethos of rationality, which is the hallmark of progress and the means by which we reify Time, History, and Progress, we must regulate collective memory. Referencing the works of Durkheim and Weber, Steve Fuller (2007) writes that "order is maintained in the modern world by past-discounting," asserting that what we are now is what we wanted to be, as "compensating for the excesses of future-discounting" (p. 8). He criticizes most conceptions of progress because often "goals are subtly shifted as they are pursued" and this method "gives rise to stances of adaptive preference formation, whereby people come to adjust their goals to match their expectations: they

come to want what they are likely to get" (p. 128). He notes that progress is often defined by concepts such as wealth, truth, freedom, and equality, "which have been subject to various, often conflicting, interpretations throughout history" (p. 128). Therefore, the myth of mastery is at the heart of rational thought as it is practiced in society. Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) assert most scandalously in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that "Enlightenment is totalitarian" (p. 4) because "[p]ower and knowledge are synonymous" (p. 2). Desire to know the unknown is predicated on the illusion that one has the very capacity to know the unknown, and, therefore, Enlightenment thinking taken to its conclusion regresses to the mythical thinking it defines itself against. Unlike primitive man though, in the modern age "humanity replaces the supreme deity as the vehicle for the ultimate realization of whether design the deity might have intended" (Fuller, 2007, p. 144).

It is important to note that Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) are not critical of rationality in of itself, but rather of those who adopt it without being cognizant of its susceptibility to irrational thinking as well. One does not have to subscribe to this belief to recognize that very few economists foresaw the economic crisis of 2008, for instance, or that very few scientists foresaw the unintended consequences of prescribing thalidomide to expecting mothers in the 1950s. Of course, one cannot predict the future, but keeping faith in the myth of mastery precludes one from acknowledging that his claims of objective knowledge may, in fact, be falsifiable. Horkheimer and Adorno wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment* during the Second World War, when the technological commodities of scientific inquiry were being used to murder innocent civilians by the millions. Yet this period of the war's aftermath, when critical theorists wrote their seminal

works, when playwrights, such as Samuel Beckett, explored the cultural wasteland left over from the appropriation of art for totalitarian's dictates, when visual artists retreated into abstraction to look inwards at the soul of man, and when existentialism attacked the abstractions of human experience, was all much too short-lived. Utopian ideals of progress yet again entrenched themselves in the Western mind. Writing in 1968, Pollard discusses the collective amnesia experienced once the West found itself benefitting from an unprecedented growth in material prosperity and innovation. Especially in the field of economics, he criticizes those who had assumed that increasing wealth and the social changes brought upon by this development will inevitably result in all forms of prosperity. With regards to global economic development, he makes very prophetic comments that are as fiercely relevant today as they were 46 years ago:

> Among the common assumptions are the beliefs that (no matter how divergent their history in earlier ages), the modern stages are basically identical, and therefore predictable and plannable, for all humanity; that progress along this unlinear path of progress is both 'natural' and desirable; that once certain early steps are correctly taken, the developing societies will continue under their own steam, in inevitable 'self-sustaining' growth, and that growth will bring inevitably in its wake such other desireable developments as greater democracy, more education and a higher status in the international community. (Pollard, 1968, p. 191)

More recent political theorists have made similar claims including Chris Hedges (2009a), who terms the American state neo-feudalist, Sheldon Wolin (2008), who terms it inverted totalitarianism, and economist Thomas Piketty (2014), who predicts that America is

entering a new Gilded Age of inherited wealth and social inequality.

This brings us to another aspect of irrationality disguised as rationality: the transposition of values relating to historical, material progress onto conceptions of moral progress. Enlightenment thought dislocates eschatology from its religious foundations, applies it to historical progress, and then maintains the myth of moral progress even when it positions Man as the godhead (Voegelin, 1952). Arendt (1970) argues that the notion of "progress of mankind" was unknown until the 17th century and then became "universally accepted as dogma in the nineteenth" (p. 25). However, the meaning of progress changed significantly: where once it was limited to the accumulation of knowledge ending with "man's coming of age," today it knows no bounds (Arendt, 1970, p. 25). It is the doctrine that now must validate itself by its nonexistent future claims. Looking back to revolutionary eschatology, the world is dominated by evil, which the Saints of God will eventually overthrow and have dominion over the earth, culminating in the end of history. In secular modernity, with no hope for divine intervention, earthly paradise will always be perpetually just over the horizon, and man is forever burdened with the task of Sisyphus.

It is interesting to note that the epistemologies of science and religion as defined in opposition to one another hardened in the 19th century, the age which Arendt (1970) argues also hardened the myth of unlimited progress. Conceptual distinctions between religion and science were far less absolute than they are today. As a product of mid-19th century social philosophy, the terms science and religion overlapped just as often as they diverged. In his essay, *The late Victorian conflict of science and religion as an event in nineteenth-century intellectual and cultural history*, Frank M. Turner (2010) maps out

this transformation. He examines the historiography of science and religion and their changing meanings throughout history and concludes that

> between 1750 and 1870 . . . the relationship of science and religion in the western world passed from fruitful co-operation and modest tensions to harsh public conflict, a situation that many observers have since come incorrectly to assume to be a permanent fact of modern cultural life. (p. 87)

His approach rejects the assumption that the modern associative meanings of science and religion were historically "a necessary or existential conflict" (p. 88). The socially-corrosive Other in Christian thought was rarely science before around 1860; the dangers were more often “materialism or atheism (neither ever well-defined), skeptical rationalism, theological heterodoxy, ecclesiastical irregularity, or outright attacks by the secular state” (Turner, 2010, p. 89). In the early 19th century, religious as well as social philosophy were deeply influenced by the French Revolution and its secular principles. British men of science worked within an ideological climate whereby one was encouraged to pursue scientific inquiry within the context of theism (Turner, 2010, p. 90). However, as theology began to define itself against the new positivism of scientific inquiry, the struggle for perfection in secular thought unknowingly retained the eschatological concerns of its predivergent epistemological ancestry.

My intention is not to argue that 21st century Western civilization is better or worse than others, nor to encourage total relativism. I am interested in how ideology functions as a pathology accepted as matter of fact, and how this pathology serves to undermine critical inquiry. There are unintended moral effects when we conflate material and moral advancement. Rationality, under the umbrella of positivism, seeks to divide

fact from value and cast aside moral judgments as beyond the realm of meaning and therefore unscientific. This is not intrinsically sinister until it becomes totalizing. When we construct modern secular education as structurally scientific, by assessing students objectively, treating teachers as technological transmitters of discrete information called knowledge, and destroying the public realm by viewing everyone as human capital and human resources, morality forcefully reveals itself. This construction of education is bizarre as to render most speechless if they ever give it a moment's thought (hopefully). As I write this on the eve of the centenary of the First World War, jihadist militants have just seized chemical weapons hoarded by Saddam Hussein's defunct regime, and mustard gas may be used to murder innocent civilians once again (McElroy, 2014). History repeats itself. We obviously cannot rely solely on science, technology, and economics for moral guidance as they are fundamentally amoral. Yet, why do we leave it to these disciplines to tell us the aims of our educational institutions? Because they are the tenets of modernity, a *progress theology* we hold so dear to us they remain unquestioned for fear that in doing so we will lose our identity as civilized moderns.

Let us discuss some moral consequences to critically abiding by this progress theology. Throughout modernity, many thinkers have questioned our conviction that we are truly rational beings. For Terry Eagleton (2010), a "mindless progressivism poses a greater threat to political changes than an awareness of the nightmare of history" (p. 155). He argues that in the modern age the *psyche* of psychoanalysis has replaced the soul of theology--yet without the comfort of God, "psychoanalysis must remain tragically unappeased . . . as the science of human discontent" (Eagleton, 2010, p. 17). He discusses Freud's “death drive,” the nihilistic unreason lurking underneath our illusions of

ourselves as rational beings, the "deliriously orgiastic revolt against interest, value, meaning, and rationality . . . [the] insane urge to shatter the lot of them in the name of nothing whatsoever" (p. 109). When applied to classical economic theory, which requires that humans behave rationally, Freud's hypothesis proves much less scandalous than one would initially think. In his work *Consuming Schools: Commercialism and the End of Politics*, Trevor Norris (2011) outlines the many interpretations of consumerist behaviour which subvert man's belief in his own capacity to act with reason. When discussing Marx's analysis of the "fetishistic character of commodities," Norris says, "The word *fetish* not only contrasts the rationality and instrumentalism prevalent in labour and production, but also suggests the residue of religion still present in commodity relations, in the belief that inanimate things have human characteristics" (p. 22). Norris also cites the work of anthropologist Theodor Veblen, whose term “conspicuous consumption” reflects the premodern desires of consumers to ritualize status even to the detriment of their own self-preservation (p. 28). Therefore, Norris (2011) argues that "capitalism is not necessarily driven by a pervasive rationalization of all aspects of human life and social existence, but often irrationality and desire" (p. 25). To stop spending, to delay gratification, is discouraged in consumer culture; to drive up personal debt to the detriment of future security (and the next generation's) is a nihilistic tendency we see too often in capitalist modernity. Global financial crises are certainly not a part of our conception of progress (Norris, 2011, p. 9).

Ronald Wright (2004) discusses what he calls “progress traps,” one of which is another example of the moral consequences of progress theology: environmental degradation, the unwanted externality of the capitalist model of growth. In *The End of*

History and the Last Man, Francis Fukuyama (1992) extols the virtues of post-Cold War liberal democracy and deems it the perfection of government. Yet, by comparing this system with failed communism, he implies that capitalism is structurally necessary to achieve “the end of history.” Wright reminds us that "[o]ur age was bankrolled by the seizing of half a planet, extended by taking over most of the remaining half, and has been sustained by spending down new forms of natural capital, especially fossil fuels" (p. 117). It is a progress that is unsustainable in every sense one could imagine, even though we recognize its expiry date. In his historical investigation of past societies, Jared Diamond (2005) cites “rational behaviour” as a compelling reason why societies self-destruct even when the conditions for its potential ruin are clearly understood:

> some people may reason correctly that they can advance their own interests by behavior harmful to other people. Scientists term such behavior 'rational' precisely because it employs correct reasoning, even though it may be morally reprehensible . . . The perpetrators feel safe because they are typically concentrated (few in number) and highly motivated by the prospect of reaping big, certain, and immediate profits, while the losses are spread over large numbers of individuals. That gives the losers little motivation to go to the hassle of fighting back, because each loser loses only a little and would receive only small, uncertain, distant profits even from successfully undoing the minority's grab. (p. 427)

He cites many examples of ineffective government regulation of natural resources to illustrate how these resources not only destroy the fate of the majority, but even the prosperity of the powerful elites who stand to most benefit from such exploitation. Kings,

chiefs, lords, and CEOs through the ages have lent credence to the notion of a repressed death drive to eat oneself.

Another example of the moral consequences of progress theology can be found in the history of imperialism, colonialism, and genocide. For Wright (2004), "the moral values attached to civilization are specious: too often used to justify attacking and dominating the other, less powerful, societies" (p. 33). Since the Enlightenment, the colonizing missions of the European West have often murdered millions by racist policies aimed at civilizing. Arendt (1973) traces the origins of totalitarianism, manifested in Nazism and Communism, to imperialist projects at the turn of the 20th century. When discussing the Boers in South Africa, she argues that colonizers viewed the native peoples as abstractions of primordial man, which thereby justified treating these peoples as savages, subhuman animals. Similar to the way we can denigrate the natural landscape to maintain progress, we tend to denigrate those inhabitants of the natural landscape who have not yet controlled nature, and separate ourselves as artifices proven worthy of being civilized:

> What made [the native peoples] different from other human beings was nature, that they treated nature as their undisputed master, that they had remained, in all its majesty, the only overwhelming reality -- compared to which they appeared to be phantoms, unreal and ghostlike. They were, as it were, 'natural' human beings who lacked the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, so that when European men massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder. (Arendt, 1973, p. 192)

Therefore, what is natural in progress theology is, in fact, the artifice of civilization,

which reaffirms the myth of mastery over nature. Time and again progress is shown to be a project only for the select few of the enlightened West.

Yet, we often become what we repress. In the novel *Blood Meridian*, Cormac McCarthy (1992) examines the savage nature of civilized man. Taking place in the aftermath of the Mexican-American war of the 1840s, its story of a group of paid scalphunters is a chilling indictment of progress for its own sake, its artistic achievement unmatched by any other work of fiction since its publication in 1985. John Ralston Saul (1995) contends that the opening of the American West was one of those rare historical exceptions where people lived outside of society as we know it (p. 73). The wilderness in *Blood Meridian* is a negative space, a space of loss, without the human presence of civilization, but apparently without anything of meaning or purpose. Since the publication of his famous essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* in 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner's (1920) examination into the effect of the closing of the American frontier had an enormous influence on popular thinking towards the frontier perception in the collective consciousness. He argued that the origins of the democratic and egalitarian spirit of the American character can be traced to the frontier experience through westward expansion. David and Jeanne Heidler's (2003) research on contemporary accounts of American attitudes towards expansionism and exceptionalism reveals that the public perception of the frontier borderlands has not changed significantly since colonial times. They argue that "mastering a wilderness bred a peculiar American spirit that would make revolution rather than bow to external power" (p. 14). Therefore, deep within the American *psyche* is a progress theology of mastery--but more insidiously a death drive turned outward, a Nietzschean will to power run amok justified by utopian

thinking. This desire to destroy emphasizes the regressive, primitive characteristic of the frontier spirit. In McCarthy's (1992) novel, the character of the judge is the ghoulish manifestation of the Enlightenment's logical conclusion to replace man as the godhead, while paradoxically absolving the individual of his moral responsibility in the divine quest for progress. He tells his tribe of American scalphunters, "every man is tabernacled in every other and he in exchange and so on in an endless complexity of being and witness to the uttermost edge of the world" (p. 147). He says, "war is the truest form of divination" (p. 261). In order to be your own War God, you must not live in mystery and fear because man can dominate nature and choose whether or not to destroy it. In this way, he can "dictate the terms of his own fate" (McCarthy, 1992, p. 208). The judge argues, "If war is not holy man is nothing but antic clay" (McCarthy, 1992, p. 319). By elevating violence by using religious rhetoric, he sees himself as the usurper of God, as if he is a war deity himself, and blood his communal sacrifice. He says, "Whatever in creation exists without my knowledge exists without my consent" (McCarthy, 1992, p. 207). He is the God of nihilism, of genocide without rational explanation, the virtue of blood for blood's sake. Attempting to rationalize murder is futile because, as the judge lectures, "It makes no difference what men think of war . . . War endures. As well ask men what they think of stone. War was always here. Before man was, war waited for him (McCarthy, 1992, p. 259).

The final aspect of progress theology, then, is its own nihilistic tendencies. With the disintegration of the public realm, man's capacity to act and make change is futile against the ideological currents of historical inevitability. Utopian futurism leads to a void of the present. When the *bios politikos* is subsumed under systems of organization,

such as economics, which render the individual a passive subject of narcissistic self-interest, it leaves a void. As John Ralston Saul (1995) argues,

> Government is the only organized mechanism that makes possible that level of shared disinterest known as the public good. Without this greater interest the individual is reduced to a lesser, narrower being limited to immediate needs. He will then be subject to other, larger forces, which will necessarily come forward to fill the void left by the withering of the public good. (p. 72)

Without the *bios politikos*, we are given the illusion of only two choices, a Manichean prompt either to accept the utopian progress of modernity or revert to the primitivism of premodernity. Progress means process, and "if everything is understood as being part of a process, and deriving its significance from the process, nothing has meaning in itself" (Canovan, 1974, p. 102). Reflecting on his novel *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley (1950) lamented this Manichean flaw inherent in his story: "the Savage is offers only two alternatives, an insane life in Utopia, or the life of a primitive in an Indian village, a life more human in some respects, but in others hardly less queer and abnormal" (p. 7). If he were to revise it, he would offer the Savage a third alternative, to create a new world in which "[s]cience and technology would be used as though . . . they had been make for man, not (as at present and still more so in *Brave New World*) as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them" (Huxley, 1950, p. 8). His view of history, like the ancient Greeks, is more cyclical, which he believes is key for the possibility for "natality" (in Arendt's , 1998, words, p. 247). Huxley says,

> for the immediate future is likely to resemble the immediate past, and in the immediate past rapid technological changes, taking place in a mass-producing

> economy . . . have always tended to produce economic and social confusion. To deal with confusion, power has been centralized and government control increased. (p. 11)

The ultimate political project of centralization and control has been totalitarianism, which Arendt (1973) argues is not an exaggerated form of past tyranny, but a deeply modern byproduct of modernist thinking to construct a singular, absolutist ideology that glorifies the inevitability of progress, represses individual agency, and encourages thoughtlessness and passivity all through the means of violence and terror. Those of us in the capitalist hegemony of the West should not be so smug, though, for Arendt (1973) argues that modernity is the common thread connecting totalitarianism and those political systems of liberal democracy. The axioms remain similar throughout.

The ouroboros, an ancient symbol depicting a serpent eating its own tail, is an apt illustration for modernity's fundamental contradictions. Appearing as early as the *Enigmatic Book of the Netherworld*, a funerary text found in the Tomb of Tutankhamun (Hornung, 1999, p. 78), the ouroboros has been commonly interpreted throughout the ages as symbolizing the circular, the eternal, the antithesis of our modernist conception of the linearity of time and progress. In a Socratic dialogue, Timaeus describes the Creator making the first creature a self-sufficient serpent, without any need for eyes, ears, or bodily organs, who ingests its own waste, because "all that he did or suffered [took] place in and by himself" (Plato, 2008). Jung (1977) interpreted the ouroboros as an archetype, reflecting the persistence of "the integration and assimilation of the opposite" (p. 365). The shadow self, revealed by the ouroboros, resides in the darkness of our psyche, which we deny by constructing a boundary between our reason and unreason, either symbolic or

physical, as manifested in the Iron Curtain. It is helpful to remind ourselves that the tyranny of linearity is only a construction of modernity, and this symbol offers us pause to reflect on the value of self-criticism. A commitment to a constant revision of concepts is the essence of modernity. Having refuted the claims of mysticism, modernity must keep reflecting back upon itself and criticize secularism. This is the true fundamental tenet of modernity, or else all other tenets become uncritical ideologies, mere contingents given the superiority of necessity. Taken another way, the ouroboros may be interpreted as ultimate futility, and we can be sympathetic to those contingent necessities we construct as certainties, for they can provide comfort against alienation and loneliness, those conditions central to modernity, as expressed in the *Earth Speaks* campaign. To quote Matthew Arnold (1998),

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night. (p. 78)

To keep vigilant against those "ignorant armies" is necessary to recognize those irrational aspects of our faith in rationality. As Terry Eagleton wrote in 1987 and which still applies today, "We are now in the process of awakening from the nightmare of modernity, with

its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality" (as cited in Grenz, 1996, p. 48). To recognize the primitive in the modern is a tragic paradox, but essential to uphold the principle of total critical inquiry or we risk falling victim to the dogmatic tyranny of progress and thereby undermining the very nature of the modernist project. Our analysis of interstellar transmissions from the opening of this chapter reveals this. Contact with sentient beings may force us to come to terms with the primitive aspects of our modern condition. From Stanley Kubrick,

> If you try to remove yourself from an Earthly perspective and look at this tragic paradox with the detachment of an extraterrestrial, the whole thing is totally irrational. Man now has the power in one mad, incandescent moment to exterminate the entire species . . . to an observer in the Andromeda nebulae, the sign of our extinction would be no more than a match flaring for a second in the heavens; and if that match does blaze in the darkness, there will be none to mourn a race that used a power that could have lit a beacon in the stars to light its funeral pyre. (as cited in Agel, 1970, pp. 353-354)

Manifestos for Education

Where modernity and education intersect is in praxis. Education is the practical, concrete manifestation of the tenets (and by proxy the dangers) of modernist thought. Turn on any news channel and one can view the societal ills of rising wealth inequality, continuing economic crises, and the encroachment of corporatism in democracy, and the solution to these problems continually falls upon education as a philosopher's stone. It is an idealism bordering on the pathological, for what is education today but a reflection of the conditions of its external environment? It has never been a Garden of Eden, protected

by its thick walls from the intrusions of society. It reflects society. Its purpose is defined and dictated by society's needs: to increase human capital for the national economy, or to teach democratic values, for instance. Today education has no freedoms; it is the servant of the society beyond its borders, and, therefore, it *is* society. It cannot produce solutions to society's problems because the means of its production contain the seeds of its own destruction. Is it the failure of education itself to live up to its goals? Or is there something structurally flawed with the pretheoretical conditions of modernity by which so often the aims of education are based upon?

Here is an example: it is a strong tenet of modernity that our contemporary systems of human organization, such as capitalism, adhere to ideals such as democracy, individualism, and meritocracy. But unfettered capitalism, according to many social theorists and economists, such as Chris Hedges (2009b) and Thomas Piketty (2014), inevitably leads to an aristocracy, or in modern-speak, “a corporate oligarchy” who uses wealth to influence the political sphere to then undermine democracy, individualism, and meritocracy. This is achieved through the idealization of corporatism which trumps the individual's best interests. According to John Ralston Saul (1995), "We are rewarded in our hierarchical meritocracies for our success as an integrated function" (p. 31). Marketplace ideology is only a specter to shroud the realities of structural social inequality, and the idea that we can reduce these inequalities through skills training and increasing human capital is putting the cart before the horse. In a true democracy, legitimacy must lie with the citizen, not the marketplace. Economics, as it was historically intended, must be the slave to politics. However, if the aims of education are simply to administer the existing corporatist system, then education is failing in its

primary role to teach thought, not merely the passive, mechanistic management of knowledge in the service of the economy.

Why do we subscribe to these aims of education while simultaneously deriding and lamenting the effects they produce? To answer this, Gert Biesta and Carl Anders Säfström's (2011) *A manifesto for education* provides a new conceptual framework for perceiving how modernity's tenets are appropriated in education. They ask: What makes education *educational*? This is difficult to definitively answer since education is currently unfree as a serf to other disciplines such as economics and sociology, but without asking this fundamental aim of education we run the risk of "eradicating the very thing that might matter educationally" (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 543). They argue that its aims tend to be defined as either populist or idealist--which both contribute to unfreedom in different ways. Populism views education as a problem to be solved by means that are objective, measurable, analytic, positivist, based on "ordering," "instrumental choice," and "scientific evidence" (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 540). Populism expects too little, for its primary purpose is to adapt to society and thereby collapse any distinction between education and society: "Education . . . both as an idea and in the form of a particular school-system, does not lie outside the construction of the modern welfare state, but its very foundation" (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 544). While populism wants education to simply conform, idealism expects too much. It makes education unfree by its "overbearing expectations" to instruct students on abstract concepts such as "democracy, solidarity, inclusion, tolerance, social justice and peace" (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 540). They criticize the Enlightenment's tendency to view education in the service of a process of liberation, and as previously discussed, our contemporary myths of the utopian

futurism of progress push the attainment of liberation as perpetually out of reach. By equating education as progress, education loses any substance because, like populism, it remains unfree as purely instrumental. I am reminded here of Horkheimer and Adorno (2002), and Marcuse's (1966) criticisms of reified subject matter, in which abstracted categories of society inculcate in the student an impotence and unfreedom to make change by their own individual agency. For instance, Biesta and Säfström are critical of "self-affirmation" (p. 541), since this presupposes an abstraction of Self, which Marcuse argues is a totalizing concept that encourages unfreedom (p. 209).

Therefore, Biesta and Säfström (2011) argue that freedom must lie at the heart of education, and not a negative freedom with the absence of any authority but rather a "relational" freedom, an "authority that carries an orientation towards freedom with it" (p. 540). They posit that an effective conceptual framework for including freedom in education is *atemporal thinking*. They ask, "Could it be, therefore, that we need to take temporality out of education in order to capture something educationally?" (p. 543). To stay in the tension between *what is* (education as adaptation to existing conditions) and *what is not* (education as deferred utopianism to nonexistent conditions) is to allow the space for "an 'excess' that announces something new and unforseen" (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 541). One may interpret populism as utopian, though, thereby collapsing the binary. Enlightenment idealism has become a corporeal utopianism. Progress has hardened into a secular myth, such as the belief that increasing human capital will alleviate the existing social inequalities in the national economy. Plato's (2007) utopian treatise *The Republic* reminds us of the tendency to apply idealism to political authoritarianism. Progress, rationality, futurism, and instrumentality may all be viewed as

characteristics shared by populism and idealism. This makes the manifesto even more alarming. Rather than being attacked by two sides, education is attacked by the totalizing domination of modernity's assumed tenets, and as discussed, the conflation of scientific, technological, and economic progress with the acquisition of moral precepts implies that issues of morality need never be brought up in modern education. What is central to the tenets of modernity are conceptions of time, history, and progress. Therefore, I take up Biesta and Säfström's challenge to think *atemporally* because it will provide the most effective means to subvert the progress theology of modernity, which lurks underneath the aims of education. Fictions shroud us from seeing education as it is actually manifested structurally. To think atemporally does not mean to think ahistorically, for temporal thinking can lend itself to an ahistorical mindset. If we take lessons from the nonexistent future, and if progress is inevitable, then why study the past? Rather, atemporal thinking means to refuse to take for granted that social conditions improve over time, or that what is accepted today is based on the accumulation and recorrection of past knowledge, and, therefore, the best means by which to educate. Atemporal thinking will help us to demarcate the "what it claims" from "the what is actually."

As a practical application of this approach, I will focus on the Ontario community college system in the following chapter. Founded in 1965, this system was born out of the culture of the 1960s, infused with the historical conditions of the Cold War and competing conceptions of progress. It is deeply associated with the development of the postwar welfare state. As Biesta and Säfström (2011) outline when discussing Sweden's postwar climate,

> Technology was to become the driving force while education was to prepare the ground for such a new society. . . The values and norms through which this brave new world would form itself were based on the power of technology to make human living smoother and more effective in achieving its aspirations . . . The rationale behind this was the need to both construct and control the emergence of a new type of citizen, the modern democratic 'man'. (p. 544)

Today, there has been a "discursive shift . . . characterized by a return to 'positivistic' knowledge produced by brain research, evidence-based research, positivistic psychology, and leadership and efficiency ideas in all matters concerning schooling" (Biesta and Säfström, 2011, p. 545). This societal change is central to understand why myths of modernity remain in the Ontario community college system. The aims of education in its rhetoric are archaic and, therefore, fictitious. Times have changed. Since the immediate postwar period, neoliberal policies have proceeded to slowly dismantle the welfare state through its ideologies of self-interest. For instance, Steve Fuller (2007) has outlined the transition from policies of public good to policies of social capital. In the 1950s, economist Paul Samuelson argued that certain public goods, including education, must be provided by the state because they will never be effectively provided for by an unregulated free market (as cited in Fuller, 2007, p. 167). Conversely, the rise of social capital in the 1970s was based on concepts of competitive advantage, "a good whose value is principally tied to the exclusion of specific customers: the exact opposite of a public good" (Fuller, 2007, p. 169). While vocational training has always remained fundamental to the Ontario community college system from its inception, the means by which education should provide this service has altered. One need only to look at the

exponential rise of tuition over the past few decades. Even accounting for inflation, it was much cheaper to attend higher education in the 1960s. Recent policy documents (e.g., the Rae Report from 2005) avoid the controversial subject of tuition freezing, since this method of government intervention is at odds with the doctrine of neoliberalism. Not only have attitudes towards education changed; the world has changed. Globalization, the dismantling of the nation-state, economic stasis: these developments have not only rendered the original aims of the Ontario community college system anachronistic, but even the principles of social capital. The implementation of neoliberal policies has even failed to live up to expectations, mainly because these policies adhere, paradoxically, to archaic conceptions of scientific, technological, and economic progress. The ouroboros keeps making its appearance.

A central claim in this thesis is that there has been a societal paradigm shift which does not appropriately reflect the curricula, assessment, and aims of the Ontario community college system. We are still burdened by progress theology, which may have been easier to defend in 1965, but today we increasingly find devoid of any meaning or substance. So many historical changes have occurred since the inception of the Ontario system: the diminution of postwar prosperity, which Thomas Piketty (2014) argues was merely an exception to the broader historical trend of capitalist growth; the rise of the New Right, Reagan, Thatcher, and laissez-faire economics; mainstream neoliberalism and the further encroachment of scientism and economics in other disciplines; and paradoxically the increasing popularity of postmodernism in both academica and culture, which is soundly disregarded by the college system other than paying it lip service by appropriating empty rhetoric such as diversity and globalization.

An analysis of the ur-text of Ontario community college policy reveals the archaism of its aims, which are still adopted wholeheartedly 49 years later. On 21 May 1965, Bill Davis, then Minister of Education and later Premier of Ontario, gave a speech to the legislature introducing a bill to establish the Ontario community college system. Davis constantly adopts the language of time and progress. Of course, this reveals nothing of its deep content, but it gives us an idea what is floating around in his mind. It is important to note all instances, listed sequentially, in order to emphasize my point: "major step forward … development … new … development … change and invention … continued growth and expansion … ever-changing … rapidly … advancing … of our times … development … future … speed of technological change … goals … present-day world" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 5), "expansion … technological change … economic growth … future growth … increased productivity and efficiency … goal … future … change" (p. 6), "change … improvement … change … rate of production of knowledge and technological applications … changes … future … advanced states of industrialism … to attain these goals … more efficient … future … development … social and technological change … fruitful changes … economic and social demands not only of today but of tomorrow … expansion" (p. 7), "fulfillment … expand … changing demands of challenging times … expansion … inevitability … updating" (p. 8), "highly industrialized province … a preview of things to come … very near future … growth" (p. 9), "developed … extend … future … anticipate … future" (p. 10), "growth patterns," "press forward," "beginning," and "development and expansion" (p. 11), "very near future … developed", (p. 12), "advanced" (p. 13), "expansion … future … change … development … press forward as rapidly as possible … immediate

future … headlong pace of technological change" (p. 14), "foreseeable future … expanded … developed" (p. 15), "expansion … future … optimistic … developments … rapidly … rapidly expanding … technical advancement" (p. 16). Compare this to possibly only three instances which explicitly make mention of the past, such as the comment, "Fruitful changes must be made throughout our school system, without, of course, destroying those valuable and still useful parts of the structure developed over many years" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 7). Obviously, this speech is introducing a new education system; therefore, language relating to the future is to be expected. However, the frequency by which Davis appeals to concepts of progress is staggering, and with so much insistence on uncritical progress it is harmful not to interrogate one's own presuppositions of the nature of linear time and historical change.

One such harm is the insistence that progress is inevitable, an insidious claim that positions the government as passive recipients of broader, largely economic, forces at work. Davis asserts that vocational training is "essential to the continued growth and expansion of the economy" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 5). There is nothing intrinsically wrong with vocational training, but Davis cites the inevitably of technological change as the precipitator of this new venture. He warns, "We have no choice but to press forward as rapidly as possible with the establishment of such colleges . . . The headlong pace of technological change gives no chance of a pause in the development" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 14). Quoting Premier John Robarts, Davis notes this change is accelerating and adopts positivist rhetoric when he says, "The evidence is surely clear and irrefutable: social and technological changes . . . are not only inevitable but in the long-run beneficial" (Ontario Department of Education,

1967, p. 6). This "man-dominated phenomenon" of change inversely reduces the individual passive against the sweeping forces of modernity: "[t]he whole history of mankind has been a story of change and adaptation; without change, obviously, there can be no improvement" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, pp. 6-7). Regardless, training students as 'knowledge workers' is necessary as "the prime economic need for societies in advanced states of industrialism" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 7).

It is worth noting three social conditions mentioned in this speech that are now becoming historically obsolete. One, the belief in continued economic expansion. Economist Thomas Piketty (2014) cites in-depth empirical evidence to support the claim that the era of postwar prosperity was the exception, rather than the rule, of modern capitalism, and we are entering an age of very slow economic growth. In fact, John Ralston Saul wrote in 1995 that real growth disappeared in the mid-1970s due to "a stock market which . . . moves in a manner unrelated to investment in real production, declining wages for the vast majority of the population, [and] chronic unemployment" (p. 118). When economic expansion transitions to near stasis, the project of guaranteeing job prosperity becomes increasingly untenable. While vocational training may be more vital in this climate, it is disingenuous to sell yourself as a guarantor of employment. Look at any advertisement for community college and you will immediately see this disingenuous rhetoric. This leads me to my second point: the changing nature of technological innovation. A utopian fantasy of technological automation reveals itself when Davis says that future graduates will be in demand to "supervise or work in our new automated factories and offices" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 9). Due to the

sweeping forces of globalization and the transition of North American society from a manufacturing to a service-based economy, technology as machines for production is becoming an obsolete term as it is increasingly becoming associated with the means to engage in global finance and administration. As Chris Hedges (2011b) argues,

> corporations don't produce anything . . . they are speculators . . . they don't manufacture, they don't make anything, they gamble, they use money, and they believe falsely that money is real, as we dismantle our manufacturing base and send jobs over the border to Mexico and finally into the embrace of China.

Davis is cognizant to learn from the mistakes of the United States community college system and establish a uniquely Canadian institution, but is yet to realize that to "continue to compete for markets on even terms at home and abroad" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 9) will erode the autonomy of the nation-state and its right to self-determine its educational policies. My third point is the supposition of population expansion, which Davis calls one of "the simple facts of life with which we must live today" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 9). Global demographic trends may be close to flatlining, as research by Thomas Piketty (2014) illustrates. Ontario community college enrollment is up mainly due to the ever-increasing numbers of international student admissions (Colleges Ontario, 2011, p. 2), which re-emphasizes the system's need to establish itself as a global, rather than national, institution. It is yet another example that you cannot take expansion as a given; changing historical conditions should make us question our assumptions of progress.

Due to this analysis, one may be lead to charge Mr. Davis as an ideologue and technocrat who has blind faith in the progress theologies of scientific, technological, and

economic advancement. However, the Hall-Dennis Report of 1968 (Ontario Department of Education, 1968), which he commissioned, offered a very progressive vision for education in Ontario's secondary schools based on true democracy and citizenship; therefore, I will reserve ad hominum judgment. As I argue throughout this thesis though, there are moral repercussions when "the citizen is reduced to the status of a subject at the foot of the throne of the marketplace" (Saul, 1995, p. 76), even within the realm of postsecondary learning. Davis not only believes that vocational training will result in monetary attainment, but also "human happiness and satisfaction" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 16). This may be not only scandalous, but deeply immoral.

The next chapter will investigate the theoretical presuppositions underlying assessment criteria in English courses taught at Ontario community colleges. As an instructor at the front lines, I recognize that the difference between what English *is* and what it *could be* finds its genesis in my experiences teaching at one of these institutions, because English as a discipline remains a potential political theatre of war in which students may be led to subversively question the axioms of the aims of their institution's educational aspirations. To quote Hannah Arendt (1964), "writing is an integral part of the process of understanding." English holds a unique place in community colleges. It is the last bastion of a mandatory humanities-oriented requirement within a system that increasingly sees no value in its pedagogical approach. To meet governmental and economic needs to teach skills in reading and writing, students must demonstrate proficiency in these abilities as part of vocational learning. However, like a corpse drained of its blood and replaced with embalming fluids, English must become purged of its subversive potential. Critical inquiry becomes an empty buzzword in favour of

depoliticized and purportedly value neutral communication skills. It becomes, in the words of T. Norris (February 27, 2014), "communication without communication" (personal communication).

CHAPTER TWO: THE POLITICS OF CLARITY

"If you live today, you breathe in nihilism. In or out of the Church, it's the gas you breathe" (Flannery O'Connor, 1988, p. 97).

The Morality of Amorality

It seems as if we are living in a perpetual crisis in education. Academics, journalists, and policy-analysts in the public realm have either contributed to this shared anxiety or noted the historiographical nature of such pronouncements (Arendt, 2006a; Bartlett & LeRose, 2013; Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 540; Fish, 2010; Mulholland, 2010; Nussbaum, 2010, p. 1; Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2013, p. 1; Sprenger, 2010). Today this discourse is largely framed within a postfinancial crisis mindset. As the promise of increased job security and social capital in a postsecondary diploma slips further away, as debt and unemployment become the common fate of recent graduates, as the Senior Economist for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives warns youth of the "scorched earth policies" championed by the older generations who wish to resist tuition subsidies (Bartlett & LeRose, 2013), the sense of collective anxiety among students and teachers alike and the pressures to ensure vocationally-relevant skills are becoming more and more palpable. Students are afraid, and nowhere is this fear of irrelevant learning (any approach which does not explicitly develop one's human capital) more heightened than in the teaching of language proficiency in college education. The Canadian government, through the Employment and Social Development division, has identified reading and writing abilities as "validated key essential skills for the workplace" (Government of Canada, 2014). The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities decrees that all graduates of provincial community colleges must demonstrate "Essential

Employability Skills", the very first being: "to communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken, and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience" (Government of Ontario, 2014). As subsidized by this government, colleges are then required to develop language proficiency in their students. According to Centennial College, these skills are "of critical importance to employers at the hiring stage, and to the potential for advancing in a chosen field and career" (Centennial College, 2014b).

The rhetoric of increasing human capital and a functionalist assumption of an educational system to service the needs of the greater economy are at work here. This is an admittedly important task, and I have no intrinsic criticisms of vocational education in principle. However, in this climate of perpetual fear, anxiety, and crisis, it is important to examine the theoretical presuppositions underlying such beliefs, and whether the blind application of these presuppositions might be having dire and unwanted consequences for those working within the structures of such systems. This is a pertinent question to ask, especially at a time when we might feel compelled to avoid asking this for trepidation of being irrelevant and unhelpful to the greater project of increasing human capital. In the collective nervousness to have education serve the needs of the broader economy, we are putting faith in the educational structures that assess such skills, I am most concerned with the moral repercussions of assessing these skills in the development of English language competency. It may seem strange to examine issues of morality in vocational education, since the rhetoric desperately avoids value-judgments entirely when discussing assessment. However, the uncontested axioms of vocational education, such as the application of scientism in all disciplines, is in itself a matter of faith. To demand

communication "clearly, concisely and correctly" is a reductionist statement that seeks to divide and keep separate the fact/value distinction of scientific positivism. I will argue that this is a form of what I will term *secular theocracy* due to the uncritical adherence of scientific, technological, and economic structures of human organization. A secular theocracy is a pedagogical imposition deemed immune to criticism and justified by its adherence to a tenet of modernity outlined previously. Like a theology, it is deeply moral, yet presented as secular, it is inversely presented as amoral and value neutral. In this chapter, I will examine the uncontested supremacy of scientific communication. We put faith in these scientific structures of human organization not for moral guidance, but instead because we mistakenly believe that they provide a neutral framework for our systems, merely an architecture for effective and efficient teaching and learning practices, and, thus, we do not require morality because the aims of education are already supplied: to increase human capital. A modern bureaucracy seeks to convince us that it is inherently rational, and, therefore, devoid of value-judgments such as moral statements. However, not only is an amoral stance a moral stance, but more dangerously a bureaucratic model of education that adopts scientific and technological principles of regulation (the same principles adopted by neo-classical economic theory) is a morally suspect ideology that attempts to convince us that it is fundamentally amoral.

I wish to examine the ways in which blind faith in these doctrines, this secular theocracy, has immoral repercussions. For example, the insistence of human capital attainment has a dark side; students who fail are deemed "human waste," according to the linguistic structures of neo-classical economic theory (Bauman, 2010, p. 4). To call a human being a kind of excrement is surely a moral pronouncement if there ever was one.

I will use the course outline and grading criteria of a specific course offered at Centennial College (2014a), COMM160: College Communications I, to demonstrate how discursive practices function to indoctrinate ideology, specifically the tenets of scientific positivism and neo-classical economic theory. I will present a historical, contextual perspective of this secular theocracy by relating the discursive practices to philosophical debates on archaic mid-20th century mindsets still adopted wholeheartedly in curriculum models today, and I will demonstrate that postmodern-oriented pedagogies, such as social construction theories, are merely paid lip service. I will frame my criticisms largely within the social theories presented by Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman, Sheldon Wolin, and Chris Hedges, particularly their accusations that bureaucratic, scientific, and economic systems of human organization serve to dehumanize the individual. We as individuals give up our capacity for action, in the words of Arendt (1998), when we allow terms such as clarity, objectivity, and human capital to mean more than the individual's desire to undermine the theoretical presuppositions that render him a powerless automaton. Decrees for clarity in writing are deeply political. In the midst of yet another crisis in education, our compulsion to make students employable may have resulted in a blind faith in a secular theocracy which purports to be completely amoral. I argue that morality has been there all along, albeit disguised, and that there are alarming moral effects when we choose belief without understanding.

Positivist Faith and Quantified Assessment

In the grading criteria outlined in COMM160, there is an explicit insistence on the desirability of "clear" and "correct" writing (Centennial College, 2014a). Demands for "correct format and length," a "clear, effective topic sentence/thesis statement," to

connect ideas in a "clear, logical order," and to identify "clear main points of support" (Centennial College, 2014a) ensure that a student will meet the first of the Essential Employability Skills mentioned in the course outline, which is to "communicate clearly, concisely and correctly" (Centennial College, 2014a). To examine the moral implications of such a methodology, it is necessary to undermine the common-sense belief in these models of assessments. In order to do so, we must acknowledge that this scientific mindset of grading language skills is a historically recent and culturally-constructed paradigm. The presupposition that language can be clear is based on a reductionist approach to knowledge found in the epistemology of scientific positivism, which demarcates judgments based on fact and judgments based on value. In other words, facts, or authoritative knowledge, can only be accessed by mind-independent objects called sense-data. Therefore, moral pronouncements are nonempirical, value-based, unquantifiable, and beyond the scope of positivist epistemology. Educational researcher Kenneth R. Howe (2009) calls this approach to assessment "the new scientific orthodoxy" (p. 428), and traces its historical application in education. Based on the work of Auguste Comte, positivism arose in the early 20th-century as a philosophical movement. According to Trevor Norris (2014), it was soundly rejected by philosophers in the post-WWII period, but co-opted uncritically by disciplines in the social sciences, such as sociology and neo-classical economics. By making reference to Quine's (1970) seminal critique of positivism *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*, Howe demonstrates that reductionism's claim to demarcate analytic and synthetic statements is based on a false premise and, therefore, untenable. In short, the premise is that synthetic statements are verified by observable sense-data and analytic statements are verified by a priori logic.

Statements that cannot be positioned as either synthetic or analytic are deemed unscientific, unfactual, and value-based. However, philosophers such as Quine (1970) and Putnam (2002) have revealed that this fact/value distinction is false because supposedly analytical statements are circular. For instance, a teacher's assessment of a student's linguistic use of meaning, definition, and clarity is formed by an assumption that concepts such as *meaning, definition*, and *clarity* are analytical, but it is only a postulation that individual statements (e.g., this phrase has correct meaning and is therefore clear) can be tested in isolation. Instead, Quine asserts that "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body" (p. 47). In other words, so-called analytic truths are, in fact, determined by other suppositions which are socially-constructed. Not only is the acquisition of language a social activity by which sounds (the signifiers) and conveyance (the signified) are assembled; words such as *meaning*, *definition*, and *clarity* are assembled in the same fashion, yet they are used as the means by which to make supposedly factual analytical statements about language. It is fitting that Howe labels these beliefs "positivist dogmas" (p. 428), since distinctly empirical and logical approaches to knowledge-acquisition may seem as sensical and universal as concepts of time and space.

In the realms of mathematical, scientific, and philosophical discourse, these criticisms of the fact/value distinction are highly esoteric and difficult to fully comprehend. For instance, Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem in mathematics, Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in quantum mechanics, and Quine (1970) and Putnam's (2002) essays all dispute reductionist claims but may be conceptually challenging for the uninitiated. This is perhaps why scientific positivism as an

epistemological method of assessment has been adopted so uncritically by educators. Euclidean and Newtonian conceptions of the world reign supreme. While theories of the social construction of language may be contested, such as Wittgenstein's (1953) language games, the most pertinent argument against the application of scientific rhetoric in the assessment of language competency is the absolute ineffectiveness of such grading criteria. For incoming international students, Centennial College uses a computer program called Accuplacer to assess a student's language skills. Accuplacer advertises itself by its ability to "accurately and efficiently assess" reading and writing skills (College Board, 2014). After assigning each test taker with a numerical score, students are then automatically placed in either COMM140/141, COMM160/161, or COMM170/171, courses in a progression of academic advancement. Yet within the first few weeks of each term, the English department is inundated with requests by teachers to move incoming students into other courses based on the teachers' own assessments of the students' writing abilities. I have suspicions that Accuplacer is merely a cost-saving device, but the belief of its inherent efficiency and objectivity is touted as doctrine by management. Faculty marking workshops can attest to the secular theocracy of this "new scientific orthodoxy" (Howe, 2009, p. 428). The grading criteria in COMM160 is highly quantified. For example, a student's demonstration of structure is scored as 30% of the total, with up to 5% awarded in six subcategories, such as meeting requirements to “stay on topic” and “connect ideas in a clear, logical order” (Centennial College, 2014a). We must make a distinction here between clarity as a value in language, and the ideological appropriation of the *rhetoric* of clarity. It is good to write clearly, but when its demand becomes heavily politicized, this is deeply problematic. All instructors in the department

must adhere to this rigid rubric, categorizing and docking specific marks for errors in structure, development, and sentence skills. However, language is an ever-evolving system; many grammatical rules, for instance, are constantly in flux, shifting in modes of acceptability. For example, many instructors argue over the correct placement of commas, and in faculty meetings this supposedly objective criteria for assessing a student's writing skills often reveals itself to be arbitrarily fluctuating when several instructors are given the same writing example to grade. Take the grammatical instance of a run on sentence, whereby two independent clauses are joined without a conjunction, perhaps separated by a comma. According to department policy, instructors must penalize a student 4% out of a total 100% on an assignment for each run on. Therefore, if students write four run ons in a final exam, their overall grade will be reduced by 16%. But professional writers often use run ons to rhetorical or literary effect. It is useful for remedial students to be advised of run ons, since a shorter sentence will help them to recognize the placement of their subjects and verbs, and thereby whether they have written a complete sentence. However, there is no faculty discussion on what context the run on is being used, which is integral to assessing the efficacy of communication. Language is never fixed, and there is a mistaken assumption that there is an objective body of knowledge that can be transmitted into the minds of students without the interference of individual cognitive misinterpretation. This approach may be apt when teaching Euclidean geometry, but as much as we may misappropriate grammar as the mechanics of language, the rules of grammar are constantly being amended by public consensus. More worryingly, faculty members in these meetings tend to admonish themselves rather than the methodology of assessment, as if they failed in their task to

implement the correct grading algorithm. The doctrine of a positivistic interpretation in *meaning*, *definition*, and *objectivity* takes precedence over a possible critical analysis of the theoretical presuppositions underlying epistemologies of scientific positivism.

In order to appreciate the moral repercussions of such a deluded and rigid insistence of this type of ineffective assessment, it is necessary to contextualize the changing conceptual definition of literacy in education. The rhetoric of building skills is a relatively recent phenomenon in public education. While the federal government conflates literacy and skills as the same concept (Government of Canada, 2014), vocational and liberal forms of education were quite distinct until well after the post-WII period. In her study of 18th-century Enlightenment attitudes towards education, Elisabeth Rose Gruner (2011) writes, "for Locke and even to some extent for Wollstonecraft, education [was] primarily a matter of manners and morals; curriculum [was] secondary" (p. 71). Julie A. Reuben (2010) notes that immediately after WWII, moral education in the United States was a pressing issue in higher education, largely framed by a need to preserve democracy and foster democratic citizenship (p. 39). By the early 1970s, American universities responded to reductions in public aid, rising living costs, and the threat of economic recession by adopting corporate models (Reuben, 2010, p. 47). While it should be noted that some institutions have retained the Enlightenment model, in other institutions students became increasingly defined in economic terms as consumers, human resources, and human capital. Curricula became increasingly vocational to meet the needs of broader economic forces, and conversely enrolment in non-practical fields, such as English and History, began to dwindle. Yearly surveys conducted by the Higher Education Research institute at UCLA reveal the changing student attitudes towards the

aims of their degree. In the late 1960s, 80% of American freshmen selected "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" as "very important" or "essential," while only 45% selected "being well off financially" as "very important" or "essential." Since the late 1980s, the percentage in these categories has been inverted (Reuben, 2010, p. 49). Noam Chomsky (2014) argues that Enlightenment thinkers would have vehemently opposed a model of education strictly based on skills transmission for the purposes of increasing human capital. He argues that the Enlightenment ideal of education, one that encourages the student to "acquire the capacity to inquire, to create, to innovate, to challenge" is the model we should be striving towards in 21st-century:

> You have to gain the capacity and the self-confidence to challenge and create and innovate, and that way you learn; that way you've internalized the material and you can go on. It's not a matter of accumulating some fixed array of facts which then you can write down on a test and forget about tomorrow. (Chomsky, 2014)

To investigate why a skills-based approach to literacy has become the dominant conception of education in the 21st century, we must ask the following questions: Which groups stand to benefit from such a model, and What is lost when students are discouraged to "challenge and create and innovate" (Chomsky, 2014)?

In order to answer the first question, Michael W. Apple (1990) contends that the best way to begin such an investigation is to "establish the connections between the dominant ideas of a society and the interests of particular classes and groups" (p. 155). Since the publication of *Ideology and Curriculum*, Apple has written to a great extent on identifying the power alliances in the United States that benefit from the hegemony of syllabus, including the selective tradition, legitimate or official knowledge

(re)production, and the hidden curriculum. At times, he has called these alliances the new right, the power bloc, or neoliberals and neoconservatives. Since the Reagan administration, Apple argues that a rightist agenda has dominated educational policy in the United States through the alliance of neoliberals (who wish to extend market-driven capitalist principles to educational models) and neoconservatives (who wish to return to the teaching of traditional knowledge, authority, standards, and national identity). This bloc has had increasing power in educational and social policy, especially in the 21st century. Apple's (1995) main concern with this bloc's influence is that it seeks to subvert the truly democratic and equitable approach to education, whereby those marginalized groups in society can learn in an environment that places them on an equal footing along with those within the dominant economic and cultural classes (p. 306).

To apply Apple's (1990) theoretical framework to a contemporary issue, and to illustrate the delusion of ideological neutrality in educational practice, I will analyze the Race to the Top program, a recent initiative headed by the United States Department of Education (2013) and championed by President Barack Obama. In February 2009, Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided the basis for increased funding in educational reform. As a $4.3 billion contest for grants, Race to the Top is intended to incentivize teachers and schools to work towards increasing student achievement based on scientific positivism. In the words of the American government, its goal is to build "data systems that measure student growth and success" (United States Department of Education, 2013). One controversial aspect of this initiative is the adoption of rigorous assessment through the use of a standardized measurement of student achievement. The United States government rewards those

school districts that "have demonstrated success in raising student achievement" (United States Department of Education, 2013). Conversely, individual teachers and schools who fail to increase student examination scores suffer a decrease in funding or institutional closures. These decisions are based solely on quantitative analyses of those data systems which measure student academic performance. A close analysis of Obama's language when giving his first speech on the implementation of Race to the Top in 2009 reveals his ideological commitments. First, he assumes that education will benefit from the application of a capitalist free-market model. Like the power bloc, he firmly asserts that improving education is "essential in re-building [the] economy", and that it must take "business leaders to invest in their local schools" (Obama, 2009). He abhors the equal distribution of taxpayer's money, or even the targeting of those schools most in need of funding, insinuating that socialist-leaning education models will not improve the education system. In order to "incentivize excellence and spur reform," schools and districts must compete with one another rather than receiving "hand-outs" (Obama, 2009). By its very nature, a race implies that some schools must fail in order for others to 'win', thereby reinforcing stratified schooling. Rather than acknowledge that governments must enforce regulatory constraints on free-market capitalism to prevent corruption (as he has argued with regards to the financial system), he warns local union leaders that collective bargaining must be "a catalyst and not an impediment to reform" (Obama, 2009). Apple (1990) warns us that those in power seek to push their ideological agenda in the guise of empiricist, politically neutral, positivist science. Obama ensures the audience that this agenda is "not based on politics or ideology or the preferences of a particular interest group" because it will be based on "data-driven results" (Obama, 2009).

However, this attitude towards educational reform reflects a neoliberal political perspective because neoliberals tend to blame ineffective schools and useless teachers as the principal causes of school and student failures. To an extent, neoliberals recognize that external social factors, such as poverty, class, and race, influence student success in the internal school system, so state intervention in educational policy is necessary to ensure students are treated equitably. However, they share the conservative belief that individuals (teachers and students) are largely responsible for the successes or failures of student academic performance. The goals of this program are commendable, but the methods by which the United States Department assesses teacher and student competency are misguided. Many of those proponents of the standards movement frame their arguments within America's lagging global economic competitiveness. This suggests a confused insistence that education follows the same rules as an economic system and, therefore, should be treated as a free market capitalist system by financially awarding those who succeed and punishing those who fail to meet academic standards. The educational system does not exist in a vacuum; its relationship to society cannot be easily separated. For example, Jean Anyon (2005) says that societal factors, such as poverty and geographic segregation, play primary roles in student academic achievement. These factors have nothing to do with the inherent abilities of either the student or teacher within the classroom. Diane Ravitch (2010), former United States Assistant Secretary of Education, argues that Race to the Top and other recent government policies aiming towards improving education value accountability and testing over a clear national curriculum strategy. Students must achieve proficiency in a particular subject, but it is left to each state to determine what proficiency actually means. In other words, *what* is

actually being taught is not as important as *how* it should be tested, and this suggests that scientific positivist models of assessment are mere patsies for the interests of the power bloc. While there is nothing inherently political in positivism, this epistemology is appropriated by the power bloc and used as ammunition to defend its claims of value-neutral educational initiatives. In the drive to improve students' minds, the national standards movement undermines the more pressing need to collectively discuss what should and should not be included in a national curriculum, and consequently how this curriculum should be assessed. As the work of Apple (1990) informs, this discussion is easy to avoid because it compels us to focus on the inherent politics of curriculum, and most dangerously, to recognize those social groups who stand to gain from a curriculum that structurally disempowers those already marginalized and oppressed.

To answer what is lost when Enlightenment ideals are discouraged in education, a discussion of the dehumanizing force of skills-based education is necessary. In *Public Education and the Public Space*, Maxine Greene (1982) presents a manifesto for the politics of education. Like Biesta and Säfström (2011), she is arguing that the aims of education must be discovered in the liminal space between *what is* (education for the purposes of social adaptation and cohesion) and *what is not yet* (education for the purposes of teaching vociferously abstract concepts ultimately unattainable in the real world). She stresses the need for a public realm in educational discourse. By echoing Hannah Arendt's (1998) criticisms of the dehumanizing force of an increasingly diminutive public arena, or *vita activa*, Greene asserts that the plurality of individuals creates communities, and these communities allow individuals to put into practice shared "symbolism" (p. 5), such as the need for citizenship and the merits of a just society. In

The Human Condition, Arendt (1998) admonishes those past political theorists who place far too much emphasis on the merits of the individual and imply that a just society is best served by the imposition of one individual's perspective. Like Marx's history of Man with a capital M (rather than men, women, people) that views humans as bound by the deterministic forces of dialectical materialism, those who ignore the public realm offer a theory of the just society as one that alienates the individual and renders him impotent to make change. For Arendt (1998), the *vita activa* is one in which each person possesses the agency to create a new beginning, not only for himself but for the broader collective forces. Change is also central to Greene's argument for the aims of education; she warns us, "The opposite of freedom is a type of alienation; is it *stasis*, petrification, fixity" (p. 4).

Demands for clarity in writing discourage students to challenge discursive practices and investigate how these practices function to indoctrinate social constructions of the aims of education which are presented as value-neutral and apolitical doctrines. For instance, take the rhetoric of *literacy*. This word has a heavy semiotic weight, but students may not be encouraged to assess its historical development and changing social meaning. Like all words, it is a construct, and it has had various associations throughout time. As mentioned, the Canadian government deems *literacy* synonymous with *skills* (Government of Canada, 2014), but this has not always been the case. In her essay *Literacy*, Lissa Paul (2011) traces the changing nature of this term so often uncritically employed by government and administration. Throughout the Reformation period, *literacy* meant the ability to read the Bible in order to achieve salvation. In the age of the Founding Fathers, as Greene mentions, *literacy* meant engagement in participatory

democracy. Only until the 19th century does this word take on its contemporary associations relating to skills and competency able to be measured empirically and quantifiably. Greene criticizes this modern usage when she laments that "literacy is talked of as if it were part of the gross national product" (p. 4). Today, the word *literacy* has been co-opted by the rhetoric of science, debasing language into a purely mechanical process of knowledge transmission. According to Greene, the moral implications of an educational discourse disinterested in morality are especially worrisome. In our technocratic age, we value narcissism, "deadness and emptiness in the public domain" (Greene, 1982, p. 5), and this results in existential despair or in Arendt's (1998) words, "world alienation" (p. 248). As we perceive ourselves to be simply consumers of education, we become passive figures, merely spectators removed from the public realm and, therefore, no longer complicit in educational policy. Trevor Norris (2011) argues that the perception of students as consumers rather than active citizens "undermines the critical task of education, reducing it to a process by which students become increasingly acquisitive yet decreasingly inquisitive" (p. 8). We blindly accept the experts who adopt the use of scientific rhetoric and convince us they know what is best for us. To seek the aims of education, Greene argues that we must have public education in a public space by compelling students to become civic-minded "thinker-actors" (p. 7). This will hopefully bring debates over morality and ethics back into the public realm of educational discourse.

This encroachment of "world alienation" (Arendt, 1998, p. 249) in the modern age may encourage existential nihilism, and this is perhaps one reason why secular theocracies exist in our educational systems. As we cast off the essentialist certainties of

religious convictions, we are still haunted by the desire to perhaps believe what we are told without thinking too critically. For instance, Max Weber (2006) argues that in classical economic theory, the Protestant "duty in one's calling," which once invigorated modern capitalism, is no longer needed, thus forgotten, but still "prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs" (p. 124). In other words, the moral imperative to be responsible with one's finances still championed today by dyed-in-the-wool neo-classical economists is subsumed by the "mechanical foundations" of "victorious capitalism," which uses human capital theory as a universal, predictive, value-neutral, and, therefore, amoral model of rational human behaviour (Weber, 2006, p. 124). This is an example of a system of human organization that arguably rests on some moral foundations which then becomes perceived as depoliticized. Zygmunt Bauman (2010) argues that in the contemporary world, groups seeking political and religious power operate "on the same territory" (p. 131). Modern states capitalize on existential insecurity for the self-reproduction of existing political and cultural institutions by touting a "secular fundamentalism": an ideology that must be "free of common and incurable human weakness, but also immune to human criticism and resistance" (Bauman, 2010, p. 130). Both religious and secular fundamentalism is based on dogmatic faith in certainty. By referring to Gödel's incompleteness theorem, Bauman argues that the seemingly inexplicable truths of modern scientific thought render the individual impotent to tackle the problems he cannot reasonably comprehend. He says,

> Confronted with such problems, human logic risks floundering and foundering. Unable to twist the irrationalities it has spotted in the world to fit the tough frame of human reason, it cuts them off from the realm of human affairs and transports

> them into regions acknowledged as inaccessible to human thought and action. (p. 133)

The events contributing to the 2008 global financial crisis provide a useful illustration of such unshakable faith in the doctrines of secular fundamentalism, specifically neo-classical economics. Our adherence to the technological mindset may be one reason why derivatives programs, allegedly risk-adverse yet breathtakingly complex financial telecommunications systems, were so wholeheartedly adopted by the global banking system, even though hardly anyone using them could understand their architecture. Robert Gnaizda, former Policy Director for the consumer-advocacy organization Greelining Group, argued years before the crisis that these derivatives instruments were incomprehensible to most investors. When he presented Alan Greenspan, then Chairman of the Federal Reserve of the United States, with over 150 different complex adjustable-rate mortgages offered by Citywide as an illustration, Greenspan freely admitted "if you had a doctorate in math, you wouldn't be able to understand them enough to know which was good for you and which wasn't" (as cited in Fergusen, 2010). Yet, Greenspan would not impose any regulatory restraints on such programs on ideological grounds. In a 2002 speech entitled *World Finance and Risk Management*, Greenspan said "these increasingly complex financial instruments have been especial contributors, particularly over the past couple of stressful years, to the development of a far more flexible, efficient, and resilient financial system than existed just a quarter-century ago". These programs then facilitated among financial institutions the trading of Collateralized Debt Obligations (CDOs), which buried subprime mortgages within thousands of other loans and were then sold as packaged investments to third parties. Even today, there is widespread frustration that

many of the architects of the financial crisis, some of whom were aware that the AAA ratings tied to CDOs were bogus and even betted against the bull market immediately before the crash, have never been judiciously prosecuted. We have yet to learn the lessons from Iceland, when the citizens rose up in the public realm and demanded a fundamental structural change in their financial system.

Like Bauman (2010), Arendt (1998) makes clear that "[m]odern loss of faith is not religious in origin" (p. 253). By discussing events such as the launch of the first artificial satellite, global exploration, and the invention of the telescope, she argues that it is the modern scientific mindset, rather than anti-religious secularism per se, that has been "alienating man from his immediate earthly surroundings" (p. 251). This is a striking observation, since it is comfortable to think that once we throw off the exigencies of irrational religious convictions we place ourselves fully within the realm of logic and reason. Most educators (and English teachers) were once taught the Euclidean and Newtonian paradigms in their youth. In her discussion of Algebra, Arendt (1998) illustrates that modern scientific discovery has deeply complicated the Archimedean point, the vantage by which an observer can objectively apprehend the subject of investigation. We can no longer simply trust our ability to access empirical sense-data. Although modern science may be "credited with a demonstrable, ever-quickening increase in human knowledge and power",

> the same phenomenon is blamed with equal right for the hardly less demonstrable increase in human despair or the specifically modern nihilism . . . the modern astrophysical world view, which began with Galileo, and its challenge to the adequacy of the senses to reveal reality, have left us a universe of whose qualities

> we know no more than the way they affect our measuring instruments . . . Instead of objective qualities, in other words, we find instruments, and instead of nature or the universe -- in the words of Heisenberg -- man encounters only himself". (Arendt, 1998, p. 261)

Perhaps this fear of nihilism lead those in the financial industries to place faith in derivatives, or those English teachers in my marking workshops to place faith in the scientific grading rubric. The increase in collective human knowledge of the world has paradoxically decreased assurance in our individual capacities for knowledge-acquisition. The secular theocracy at work here is the doctrine that broader systems of human organization, whether these determine your best financial investments or assess your English proficiency, must know more than we as individuals do.

The Totalitarian Secular

There are serious moral repercussions to placing faith in a system which purports itself to be rational and objective. Both Arendt (1998) and Bauman (2000) warn us that our own humanity, or *humanness*, is at stake. Bauman's (2000) critique of modern sociology in *Modernity and the Holocaust* presents a chilling example of the consequences of such secular theocracy. Bauman (2000) argues that most sociological perspectives of the Holocaust tend to view the event as a barbaric interruption in the civilizing narrative of Western culture, only a temporary suspension of the intrinsically good force of purportedly scientific forms of organization. When viewing the Holocaust through this perspective,

> one thing that emerges from the experience of the Holocaust intact and unscathed is the humanizing and/or rationalizing (the two concepts are used synonymously)

> impact of social organization upon inhuman drives which rule the conduct or pre- or anti-social individuals. Whatever moral instinct is to be found in human conduct is socially produced. It dissolves once society malfunctions. (Bauman, 2000, p. 4)

The belief that our animal savagery is tempered by social organization is a dangerous one, as Bauman (2000) goes on to argue vociferously that, *in fact,* the events of the Holocaust proceed from rational systems of social organization, such as bureaucracy, the scientific mindset, and the consignment of values to the realm of subjectivity. Being rational does not correlate to engaging in moral acts. For instance, dogmas of scientific positivism deem moral pronouncements unscientific, unfactual, and value-based because they cannot be situated as analytical or synthetic. This becomes an uncontested, axiomatic ideology, held by some with as much conviction as the belief in a personal god. The theoretical physicist Steven Weinberg (1999) once said, "Religion is an insult to human dignity. Without it you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion." He might be hard-pressed to acknowledge the secular nature of Hitler's program of *endlosung*, as Arendt and Bauman have taken great pains to demonstrate that Nazi ideology treated "denial of the authority of private conscience" and forced submission to ideology as the highest moral virtue (Bauman, 2000, p. 22). Discussions of the moral dimension of action, such as the sanctity of human life, were deliberately prevented from public discussion by the Nazi bureaucracy. Gas chambers were called bathrooms, for instance (Bauman, 2000, p. 12). Bauman (2000) terms this the "purposefully concealed . . . moral character of action" (p. 24). Not only were actions systematically sanitized of

their semiotic weight, many scholars have debunked the myth that most of the perpetrators themselves must have been barbaric criminals, miscreants, sadists, or other irrational types of abnormal humans. Kren and Rappoport (1980) note that based on survivor testimony, only about 10% of the SS could be considered abnormal according to conventional psychological criteria (p. 70). Members of the mobile killing units, the *Einsatzgruppen*, were conscripted precisely because they previously demonstrated businesslike and impersonal behaviour. Bauman (2000) writes, "Personal gains, and personal motives in general, were censured and penalized. Killings induced by desire or pleasure . . . could lead (at least in principle) to trial and conviction, like ordinary murder and manslaughter" (p. 20). Conversely, depersonalized murder, the employment of tasks according to the rational structures of Nazi bureaucratic order, were not considered moral actions, since it was a moral imperative to disassociate one's actions from one's conscience.

Discussions of Nazi ideology and the Holocaust may appear wildly inappropriate to the context of English language assessment, but my intention here is to disrupt the common-sense paradigm that rational systems of human organization are *intrinsically* amoral and value-neutral, and, thus, these structures can bring us no harm. There are, in fact, serious moral consequences to systems that encourage participants to disassociate actions from conscience in the guise of clarity or objectivity. Arendt (2006b) calls this state of mind "thoughtlessness," and her discussions of its ramifications provide for us a fitting application to the subject of English language learning and assessment. For language to be "clear" and "objective," as the COMM160 Course Outline demands, it must become in a sense depersonalized. Lynn Fendler (2012) argues that in the social

sciences and the humanities, there are two genres of texts: informational and generative. Informational texts are instructive and expository, while generative texts are "designed in generate in us experiences, feelings, and sensibilities" (p. 324). Fendler argues that generative texts are what make education *educational*. In order to teach critical literacy, for example, generative texts allow for a reflective analysis of the message's form and content. They demand students to position themselves as participants in the communicative process as not only receiver but interpreter of meaning, "to generate understandings in us" (Fendler, 2012, p. 324). Clarity and interpretation are not necessarily at odds with each other; rather to think of texts as generative helps one to clarify the politicized rhetoric of clarity, *the politics of clarity*. This understanding of communication is postmodern-oriented, since it recognizes the distinction between signs and signifiers; words have no intrinsic meaning, and it is only "the corporate body" (Quine, 1970, p. 47) that determines meaning by consensus. Conversely, informational texts are like road signs; they are meant to convey meaning ideally without any interpretation/interference from the receiver. By its nature, these texts are depersonalized, since they attempt to transmit meaning universally.

The moral dimensions of informational and generative texts are more easily appreciated when we see how different disciplines perceive the activity of writing. In scientific writing, accuracy, clarity, and economy are lauded, while in the humanities often the work itself is the embodiment of understanding achieved. An explication of the Second Law of Thermodynamics has very different aims than those of a high modernist novel, for instance, although the desire for the reader to simply *understand* is perhaps common to all writing. However, the assumption of intentionality is what differentiates

various writing. Many novelists abhor explaining the message of their texts, since it undermines the texts' generative function (Pullman, 2011, p. 128). In scholarly writing, intentionality is perhaps more strongly desired, although this will vary according to the scholar and the discipline. In scientific writing though, the author's intention is central. There is a moral element to the teaching of informational, rather than generative, writing because informational writing is often praised to the detriment of generative writing in higher education. This praise then extends to the "utilitarian public language of modern liberal democracies," as Stefan Collini (1993) explains:

> Language that is intensely suspicious of non-demonstrable judgments of quality and intolerant of non-quantifiable assertions of value, makes it easier to justify fundamental research in the natural sciences, with its promise of medical, industrial, and similar applications, than to justify what is anyways only with some awkwardness called 'research' in the humanities. (p. lx)

While it is obvious that an explication of the Second Law of Thermodynamics is thoughtful, it is also *anonymous*, since the message is meant to be the same no matter the writer. Students are being indoctrinated to believe that nonutilitarian, artistic, literary, generative language is useless and unnecessary for their educational attainment and future careers in the social realm. They are encouraged to write *anonymously*, and a by-product of this manner of communicating is a form of thoughtlessness: a message divorced from the personality of the author, in which only the signal matters, rather than the sender and receiver as well. There is much anonymous writing on the internet, and historically many authors have chosen to publish under pseudonyms, but my criticism here is that anonymous writing should not be imposed and taught as superior to other

varieties. Martha Nussbaum (2010) argues that people behave immorally when the threat of personal accountability is taken away: "People act much worse under shelter of anonymity, as parts of a faceless mass, than they do when they are watched and made accountable as individuals" (p. 43). In a polemic against the increasing devaluation of humanities-oriented education, she cites many sociological studies, such as the famous Zimbardo Stanford Prison Experiment and the Milgram Experiment on Obedience to Authority Figures, as examples that attest to the moral repercussions of enforced anonymity.

This may all seem excessive, since English teachers are not exactly grooming prison guards. However, there are consequences to instructing students to write in a depersonalized, anonymous fashion, as a scientist would write, in order to convey an ideally universal message. It is ultimately dehumanizing. In *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell (1946a) warns us that "if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought" (p. 262). In his diatribe against phraseology, such as fixed expressions and clichés, he argues that modern writing avoids using words for the sake of their meaning, and instead ties together "ready-made phrases" (Orwell, 1946a, p. 258). Orwell (1946a) calls this a "lifeless, imitative style" which has now become orthodoxy in current political discourse (p. 258). It is bad writing to use vague expressions, so there is an imperative to use expressions consented to by the “corporate body” (Quine, 1970, p. 47), but it is also bad writing to uncritically adopt previously identified expressions because it discourages the writer from creating his own imagery to breathe new semiotic life into those words and expressions. As Orwell (1946a) notes,

> When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases . . . one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy . . . A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church. (p. 258)

A depersonalizing force is a dehumanizing force; it diminishes the individual agency of the communicator and renders him a passive mechanism.

In her report on the Eichmann trial, Arendt (2006b) argues that the accused's self-deception, rather than overt mendacity, played a larger role in his criminal behaviour as a leading organizer of the Holocaust. She argues that Eichmann aspired to be an "idealist," one who had "his personal feelings and emotions, but would never permit them to interfere with his actions if they came into conflict with his 'idea'" (p. 42). By inverting Weisenberg's comment that one needs religion to compel good people to do evil things, we may conclude that a blind faith in any ideology, including a secular theocracy, may lead good people to do evil things. When examining transcripts of the police examinations and the trial, Arendt (2006b) concludes that Eichmann was able to self-deceive by his use of depersonalized, anonymous language. She calls his words "stock phrases," "slogans," and "Officialese" (the German word *Amptssprache* translating loosely as "department German"; Arendt, 2006b, p. 48). Judges called it "empty talk"

when he repeated verbatim the same phrases in trial as he did during police examinations, and though they believed this emptiness was insincere, Arendt (2006b) argues that she witnessed how language can, in fact, corrupt thought:

> the longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such. (p. 49)

Nussbaum (2010) echoes Arendt's (2006b) assessment of Eichmann when she argues that "the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person" (p. 7) is a crucial ability for a healthy democracy. In totalitarian states or secular theocracies, this ability is actively discouraged.

In COMM160, students are actively encouraged to dehumanize their writing in two significant ways: to write stock phrases, and to conform to correct paragraph formatting. These rules condition students to develop an aversion to moral discourse. Although they may be prompted to state value-judgments, it is ultimately insincere, since the value-judgments are superficial and vapid. Gert Biesta (2012) notes the difference between what he terms a *mechanistic* versus a *pragmatic* communication process. Stock phrases, where meaning is closed-ended, reflects the mechanistic conception of communication, which asserts that effective communication is only possible when there is a basis of common understanding (Biesta, 2012, p. 3). Although Biesta acknowledges nothing suspect in this process in principle, he argues for the need to foster the pragmatic

conception of communication in the classroom as well. Pragmatic communication celebrates creation and transformation to create newness, or a "third space" or an "open gap" where novel meanings and "new events" can occur (Biesta, 2012, p. 4). Arendt (1998) similarly argues for the possibility of "natality" in political discourse (p. 247). Methods of assessment based purely on a mechanistic conception attempt to close this gap by sanctioning what is correct and incorrect about communication:

> Given that assessment, rather than teaching or pedagogy, is the key process in closing the educational gap, it is perhaps not without significance that teaching and pedagogy are increasingly being replaced by and redefined as assessment, thus running the risk of driving the event out of education. (Biesta, 2012, p. 4)

An examination of COMM160's grading rubric reveals that students are very much rewarded when they engage in "empty talk" (Arendt, 2006b, p. 49). In order to be assessed as an A student, writing must be "clear," "concrete," "coherent," "accurate," and "effective." As mentioned, mechanistic communication has its merits. It instructs students on logical argumentative progression, and encouraging them to communicate in the manner of T. S. Eliot's poetry is not exactly appropriate. However, there must be a middle ground, and a rigid adherence to mechanistic communication is dehumanizing because it implicitly encourages students to simplify complex subject matter or avoid it altogether. For example, in a recent class, I assigned an article on conflict minerals in the Democratic Republic of Congo. My intention was to urge students to reflect upon their own indirect involvement in the brutal social conditions in Congo, how their consumption of technological devices may be connected to child labour in another part of the world. I chose this topic because I was frustrated by my department's

recommendations of reading material, which consisted of largely sanitized and apolitical topics related to social networking and cell phones. However, the requirement that students conform to correct paragraph formatting led me to compel students to write response paragraphs that dangerously simplified the issue. Students must write a clear argument in the first sentence, and previous faculty marking workshops had stressed the desire for them to state an argument that can be coherently defended in one paragraph. I asked the question, "Who is to blame for the existence of child labour in Congo?" One student told me that this question was too difficult to answer, for there are many groups that collectively bear responsibility, such as Western governments and consumers, global corporations, and the Congolese militias. I told him to disregard the complexity, keep it simple and pick one group, which I now deeply regret. When I discussed my concerns with the department chair, he informed me that there is a division between art and communication, and in order to teach students to effectively communicate, we must avoid controversial topics such as politics. Utilitarian language breeds utilitarian thought.

My main concern with the grading rubric in COMM160 is that its implicit encouragement to dehumanize communication undermines its competing claim to explicitly encourage critical thinking. According to the course learning outcomes outlined in the Course Outline, students must "apply critical thinking skills;" in order to receive an A, students must demonstrate "evidence of critical thinking" (Centennial College, 2014a). Yet, the assessment criteria is fundamentally contradictory and favours dehumanized writing, since critical thinking, taken to its logical conclusion, ultimately undermines the impetus to write anonymously (or scientifically). By the term's very nature, *critical thinking* has many variations in meaning. Based on analyses of several research studies,

Molnar, Boninger, and Fogarty (2011) posit that critical thinkers "can take different points of view; they can identify, understand, and evaluate the assumptions, point of view, and logic behind a given position or proposed solution to a problem; and, they can generate and evaluate alternative solutions" (p. 4). Critical thinking is a contextual and nonmechanistic communication process that assumes the student possesses the agency to come up with novel ideas. According to Perkins and Grotzer (1997), it encourages "cognitive reorganization" by acknowledging complexities and fostering "metacognition", the process of monitoring and managing one's thinking (p. 1128). Ritchhart and Perkins (2005) argue that we all have natural cognitive tendencies that run counterintuitive to critical thought. For example, we tend towards favourably biasing our presuppositions, we draw upon limited evidence to reach conclusions, we invent categories and classifications prematurely, and we favour emotional responses over deliberate thinking (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2005, p. 775). Therefore, the educational setting is essential to nurture a student's critical capacities in order to become a "knowledge builder" and "problem solver" (Ritchhart & Perkins, 2005, p. 776). The authors cite many recent research studies revealing that higher education biases knowledge and skills acquisition over critical thinking. Perhaps this is because critical thinking would eventually lead students to question the epistemological basis for assessment and, therefore, undermine the authority of the institution and its methods of scientific positivism. Humanized writing leads to dissent because it celebrates the uniqueness and individual agency of the student. Cognitive development is a morally neutral activity, but the foundations for moral discourse rest upon the act of critical reflection. Critical thinking prompts autonomous moral inquiry. If morals are predetermined, then there is no

need for moral inquiry, but if students are encouraged to tolerate ambiguity, they will be led to undermine the shaky foundations of assessing clear and correct writing and the validity of the grading criteria would crumble. Instead, critical thinking is kept in its place in order to prevent dissenters from openly questioning the authority of the institution and its untenable claim to be able to effectively assess communication skills. It is too easy to justify such an approach by stating that utilitarian writing is necessary in remedial learning, that you need to master this form before moving upwards cognitively. In practice, and speaking from experience, students must be initially encouraged to assume the role of "thinker-actors" (Greene, 1982, p. 7) or they will resist any other pedagogical approach. Critical thinking must come first; it is the combustible force which excites the student to simply begin to engage in writing instruction.

A tolerance for ambiguity and a suspicion of presupposed certainties are reflections of what I term *postmodern-oriented pedagogies*, which tend to perceive knowledge as social constructions.[2] In the study of the sociology of scientific knowledge, many theorists have asserted that science does not present a faithful reflection of reality. Wolf Lepenies (1989) argues that scientific knowledge is a "cultural system [that] exhibits to us an alienated interest-determined reflection of reality specific to a definite time and place" (p. 68). Stefan Collini (1993) notes that the field of literary theory has "reached out to subsume science under its characteristically corrosive categories: science, too, it is argued, is a discourse, involving the same kinds of rhetorical strategies, literary tropes, and unstable meanings as other forms of writing" (p. *l*). Locke (1992), Latour and Woolgar (1979), and Barnes, Bloor, and Henry (1996) have performed exhaustive

[2] It should be noted here that postmodernism is not the only approach which celebrates critical pedagogy. Western thinking since Plato has engaged in this inquiry in some form or another. However, I will discuss postmodernism as it relates to critical pedagogy because historically it is responding to modernity.

sociological studies to argue for the social construction of scientific knowledge. In *The Social Construction of What?*, Ian Hacking (1999) engaged in a meta-analysis of academic debates over social construction theory in order to test the theory's limits. Many opponents of social constructionism argue that this line of reasoning will lead one down a rabbit-hole of total relativism. Some might argue that this is a misappropriation of postmodern epistemology. Regardless, it is my opinion that this is an unresolvable debate, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to side one way or the other. I do not intend for my criticisms of scientific positivism as assessment criteria, for instance, to convince the reader of the total social construction of scientific knowledge. In fact, convictions of total relativism would undermine my agenda to integrate critical thinking and humanized writing into the curriculum. If concepts such as truth and reality are constructions, if any opinion or idea is as good as the other, if religious fundamentalism is just as valid as the laws of physics, then there is no structural basis to determine issues of morality. As Hacking notes,

> Today's English-language traditions of political theory emphasize individual liberty and individual rights. Human beings are thought of as self-subsistent atoms who enter into relationships with other human beings. . . Such pictures invite us to think that first there are individual ''selves,'' and then there are societies. . . . People who subscribe to this vision or strategy find talk of social construction suspect. (p. 15)

My interest is not in the *ideas* of social construction theory and other postmodern-oriented pedagogies, but rather *how* these ideas become actualized in the structures of higher education, since my argument rests on the manifestation of the power dynamics of

competing epistemologies. At Centennial College, postmodern-oriented pedagogies are merely paid lip service, because it is essential to keep strict limits on social construction theory for the maintenance of secular theocracies. Multiculturalism is the mantra ideology of 21st century education. It is a part of the college's mission statement to "value and respect multicultural diversity" (Centennial College, 2014c). While public discourse on the moral quandaries of multiculturalism must rest on the separation of race/ethnicity and culture, certain subjects within education fail to recognize this division and, thus, become off-limits. Issues of culture become charged as racist indictments. An argument against Israeli settlements on the West Bank is deemed anti-Semitic. An argument against the hijab as oppressive against women's rights is deemed Islamophobic. These are important discussions to have, but they are actively silenced in the classroom. Thus, the multicultural ideology becomes an uncontested belief, a secular theocracy which discourages democratic participation in moral discourse. Most dangerously, the ideology of multiculturalism is a distraction; it provides a veneer of inclusivity to subvert the questioning of more surreptitious, all-encompassing cultures in which all students are commanded to participate, such as consumerism, capitalism, and the integration of technology in the classroom. As Chris Hedges (2009b) argues, slogans of diversity shroud multiculturalism's "silent partner:" “the fragmentation of student society into diverse but disarmed droplets" (p. 93). For instance, Centennial's mission statement also refers to students as "human resources", and it affirms its desire to adopt "state-of-the-art information technologies" (Centennial College, 2014c). Social construction theory is tolerated if it celebrates boutique multiculturalism, but it resists its application to the corporate model of higher education, for instance. Michael W. Apple (1990) calls this the

“hidden curriculum,” the implied normative values about what is legitimate knowledge and what is not (p. 14). As discussed, scientific positivist epistemology is still adopted without question as valid assessment in COMM160, even while the cafeteria proudly serves food from around the world. For those faculty selected to participate in course development, the training software concretely reveals this hidden curriculum. In order to conform to the predetermined digital course outline template, faculty must ensure that learning outcomes are "observable and measurable" (Centennial College, 2014d), so that they meet 2-4 Essential Employability Skills decreed by the Canadian government. Then, a faculty member's completed template must be approved by the Centre for Academic Quality, the centralized administrative and bureaucratic department of the college. Each learning outcome is assessed such that it can be quantitatively verified and then mapped onto an existing template of learning outcomes preapproved by the Canadian government. During a conversation with a colleague who performs this mapping, I learned that the program is structurally flawed. A hierarchy of values cannot be ascribed to each learning outcome, and, therefore, the program perceives each outcome as having equal weight. One learning outcome may be overrepresented while another may be underrepresented, thereby distorting the course developer's intentions. However, those who perform mapping are only using the program's interface; they are victim to its complex architecture. The ideology of scientific assessment is so powerful that even those who implement assessment criteria are aware of the system's internal errors, yet are powerless to make any corrections.

Discourses of Critical Thought

It is important to ask if critical thinking and broader debates over moral issues should even be the responsibility of institutions of higher education. The most candid defender of an amoral model of schooling is Stanley Fish, whose series of articles on the topic have sparked debate over the place of morality in the classroom. Fish (2003) argues that democratic and academic values are mutually exclusive. While he accepts that the preparation for democratic citizenship is a noble task, it must be beyond the scope of the institution in order to maintain a disengaged and neutral political stance. Some of his reasons are valid. For instance, moral instruction may lead to discipleship and confusing education with emotional therapy. He asserts that is simply not the institution's responsibility to engage in moral instruction (Fish, 2004). My opposition to Fish (2003/2004) rests on four objections. Firstly, academic virtues are inseparable from moral virtues. Demands for honesty, integrity, and thoughtfulness in scholarship equally extend to democratic participation. A student who plagiarizes or purchases essays is akin to a politician who lies and refuses to stand by his previous comments in public address. Secondly, teachers do not need to bias the classroom dynamic by making moral pronouncements. There is a difference between explicit moral instruction and the allowance for discussions of moral inquiry. Thirdly, paternalism is not necessarily a bad word. At times, education must be paternalistic to an extent in order to have a fighting chance against the paternalism of those economic groups who seek to benefit from our illusions that some structures in our educational system are purely instrumental. For instance, the encroachment of commercialism may be viewed as a celebration of the freedom to choose. However, students as consumers in a sphere of unrestrained

capitalism can develop a false sense of autonomy, and, thus, will not develop the critical capacities to recognize the antidemocratic forces at work in school commercialism. The ability to choose between various Coke products is not exactly freedom of choice. As Chris Hedges (2009a) argues, "unfettered capitalism is the misguided belief that personal style, mistaken for individualism, is the same as democratic equality." The corporate desire to make students consumers may involve a process of reducing the efficacy of education's goal to make them better citizens. For example, teaching right from wrong may be at odds with Coke's goal to increase consumption in schools, since critical thinking of ethics and morality may lead students to be brand disloyal and challenge the hegemony of their products and their illusion of choice.

My fourth objection is based upon criticisms offered by Stanley Hauerwas (2010), Terry Eagleton (1995), and Noam Chomsky (2014). Hauerwas argues the issue of money is completely absent from Fish's protests against moral education (p. 99). Educational institutions run on money, whether they are for-profit universities in the United States or government-subsidized ones in Canada. Centennial College would close its doors if enrollment suddenly vanished. Although Fish explicitly rejects that universities should be in the business of vocational training, "he has never apologized for being well-paid" (as cited in Hauerwas, 2010, p. 99). This may seem like ad hominum, but Hauerwas brings up a deeply salient point. Fish is currently a tenured professor at the Cardozo School of Law in New York City. It is a private institution with a tuition of $51,208 for the 2013-2014 year that openly advertises its postgraduate employment statistics online (Cardozo School of Law, 2014). It is unclear to what extent this school is adopting the corporate model, but Fish's desire to teach a liberal education in a political vacuum is difficult to

accept on the surface. As Hauerwas (2010) argues, "whoever it is that values liberal education needs to sustain that education with the only measure we have of value, that is, money" (p. 99). Terry Eagleton (1995), in his review of Fish's book *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change*, argues that Fish's rejection of both the humanist study of literature, with its overt moral dimensions, and the political approach to use literature to make better citizens has left him "without any justification for his work as a literary critic" (p. 6). As enrolment in literary studies dwindle each year, Fish may be hard-pressed to acknowledge that his position as tenured professor may make his arguments against the political nature of academia less than valid. Noam Chomsky (2014) and Benjamin Ginsberg (2011) have written about the corporate model of modern universities, and how tenured positions are becoming more and more scarce. Chomsky argues that it is essential for these corporations to "increase labor servility" by hiring faculty off the tenure track, because this keeps them "docile and obedient." The precarious teaching position reflects the neoliberal phenomenon of running institutions of higher education like a business. It creates a climate of fear and insecurity, and it compels faculty to avoid asking for higher wages, or to go on strike. I am a contract instructor at an Ontario community college, and my position has been perpetually precarious since I began teaching in 2009. Every term, I am officially re-hired (hopefully), and it is often only a few weeks before the start of the new term when I know if I will be able to pay my mortgage. I recently received an offer to teach this summer, and its language highlights the precarious nature of my position: it is only a "tentative" offer that is "contingent on enrolment numbers," and "this may result in a change to [my] employment status." In

other words, I should be happy with what I get so don't complain. Chomsky (2014) speaks about the alleged need for worker 'flexibility':

> The idea that labor should meet the conditions of "flexibility" is just another standard technique of control and domination. Why not say that administrators should be thrown out if there's nothing for them to do that semester, or trustees -- what do they have to be there for? The situation is the same with top management in industry: if labor has to be flexible, how about management?

Fish is in a privileged position to demand amoral education because he benefits from a neoliberal, corporate model of higher learning that has personally favoured him. Moral inquiry must be a part of the curricula because it is already there, albeit disguised, in the fundamental institutional superstructures. Money talks. The ideal of an amoral model is merely a specter, and those who sell us this myth may be benefitting from the power structures that perpetuate this specter. The crisis in education, largely framed in a postfinancial crisis mindset, is used as an instrument of domination. A crisis keeps dissenters at bay. A crisis creates a heightened feeling of job insecurity, that money will be taken away from us at any notice, and it compels us to accept the most fundamental presupposition of the model of higher education in the 21st century: the corporate institution. Treating students and faculty as human resources, amending curricula to teach skills rather than literacy, adopting ineffective but ideologically-sound assessment criteria based on scientific rationalism, and favouring vocational learning while discrediting the value of humanities-oriented disciplines is a deeply moral issue, yet it is presented to us time and time again as value-neutral, amoral, and apolitical, and, therefore, beyond the scope of moral inquiry. This educational superstructure has dire moral reverberations if

we do not foster the competency in students and teachers to actively question these most dominant and oppressive axioms of educational models, even if there is no visible tyrant at the helm. As Arendt (1998) argues in reference to modern bureaucracy: "the rule by nobody is not necessarily no-rule; it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its crudest and most tyrannical versions" (p. 40).

It is conceptually challenging to discuss a system of domination whereby nobody is ruling. Chomsky (2014) argues when speaking about corporations, we must distinguish the individual from the institution. Forms of tyranny are inherently monstrous, and while individuals participating in that system may be benevolent, "in their institutional role, they're monstrous, because the institution is monstrous" (Achbar & Abbot, 2005). Sheldon Wolin's (2008) concept of *inverted totalitarianism* is helpful to understand how a monstrous institution can be collectively made up of individuals who are not monstrous, where participants can propagate ideology without being completely cognizant of the ideology itself. Elucidated in his book, *Democracy Incorporated*, Wolin offers an expansive and complex argument, but his articulation of how antidemocratic, imperialist, and dogmatic forces can rein in a supposedly democratic American society offers a conceptual framework for my arguments within an educational context. In a speech given in 1918, Max Weber spoke of the process of "disenchantment" when Western society transitioned from traditional and religious to modern and secular. Bureaucratic and rational systems of human organization mean that:

> there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to

> master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. (Weber, 1918, p. 8)

Since then, many thinkers have challenged the claim that modern society is totally devoid of magical means. Bauman (2010) links religious and secular fundamentalist ideologies. Arendt (1998) states, "Modern loss of faith is not religious in origin" (p. 253). Trevor Norris (2011) argues that modern consumer culture is driven not by a Protestant ethic of self-denial, as Weber (1918) characterized capitalism in his time, but rather hedonism: contemporary capitalism "is not necessarily driven by a pervasive rationalization of all aspects of human life and social existence, but often by irrationality and desire" (p. 25). One could interpret irrationality as magical means. Wolin (2008) asserts that Weber underestimated our inherent desire for credulity, and there is much myth to be found in an age with the veneer of scientific rationalism (p. 12). He differentiates modern American myth as *constitutional imaginary* and *power imaginary*, one being a democratic belief, the other being antidemocratic, based on "sanctified" authority (Wolin, 2008, p. 20). Note the religious vocabulary. This *power imaginary* grew to prominence in American thought immediately after WWII, as the nation became a Cold War Superpower, and this new imaginary displaced the New Deal-inspired *constitutional imaginary* of the pre-WWII period. America had a new duty to maintain its status as the global military and economic authority, paradoxically by using any means available, even imperialist dictates, to preserve freedom for the American populace and, secondarily, for the rest of the free world. Wolin calls this ethos the new "civil religion," in which any dissidents (communists, pacifists, defender of New Deal social policies) are deemed blasphemous

heretics in a new universal, state-sanctioned morality (p. 37). Enter *inverted totalitarianism*, "a set of effects produced by actions or practices undertaken in ignorance of their lasting consequences," the two most worrisome practices being "the acceptance of restraints on personal freedom and being resigned to political impotence" (Wolin, 2008, p. 42). The disintegration of the public realm and the emergence of the social (in the words of Arendt) have led to a fundamental reconstruction of power arrangements which inhibit individual freedom. What is most insidious about inverted totalitarianism is that it "professes to be the opposite of what, in fact it is" (Wolin, 2008, p. 46). We are deluded into thinking we live in a democratic society; this becomes the myth, the magical mean, that shrouds the imperialist, antidemocratic political and economic oligarchies that rule by *managed democracy*. Even in a Canadian context, we take comfort in believing what we are not. We draw our own Iron Curtain across the 49th parallel. We tell ourselves we celebrate multiculturalism while Americans enforce the doctrine of assimilation. However, our institutions of higher education bear more resemblance to the for-profit schools in America as we would like to think: “Managed democracy is centered on containing electoral politics; it is cool, even hostile toward social democracy beyond promoting literacy, job training, and other essentials for a society struggling to survive in the global economy. Managed democracy is democracy systematized” (Wolin, 2008, p. 47). A quick glance at the Canadian government's Essential Employability Skills, which conflate literacy and skills, or Centennial College's (2014) mission statement to "provide employers and communities with the human resources they will require for economic success and contribution to the community," reveals that both Canadian and American educational institutions serve the same masters.

Chris Hedges' (2009b) criticisms of the encroachment of corporate culture in all aspects of American life demonstrate how the idea of freedom is misappropriated and abused by the doctrines of neo-classical economic and human capital theory. It is a fallacy to conflate freedom of democracy and so-called freedom of the free market. He claims that we live in an "empire of illusion" whereby our faith in consumerism as an expression of democracy is "our culture's secular version of being born again", in which to dissent is to be branded an "apostate" (Hedges, 2009b, p. 53). In the institutions of higher education, students are taught deference to authority so as not to question its "self-justifying" corporate structure (Hedges, 2009b, p. 90). Thus they are taught skills rather than literacy, answers rather than values. Students should be taught all of the above. Language holds power, and demands for clear and correct writing limit our ability to undermine and subvert. I am reminded of the cannibalized language Newspeak in Orwell's (1989) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, intended to make speech "independent of consciousness" and therefore expressions of "unorthodox opinions" or "heresies" nearly impossible (p. 323). The humanities must be devalued to organize education around brutally utilitarian language, "predetermined answers to predetermined questions" (Hedges, 2009b, p. 103). Therefore, the corporate model of education becomes axiomatic, and issues of conscience and morality become irrelevant. Economy takes precedence over politics in the inverted model of classical totalitarianism (Wolin, 2008, p. 38). The most fundamental tenet of this new orthodoxy is that the corporate model is naturally democratic, which Hedges (2009b) criticizes:

> Democracy is not an outgrowth of free markets. Democracy and capitalism are antagonistic entities. Democracy, like individualism, is based not on personal gain

> but on self-sacrifice. A functioning democracy must often defy the economic interests of elites on behalf of the citizens. (p. 185)

Yet, illusion becomes a "utopian faith" in the supposed freedom of the corporate and consumer models of education (Hedges, 2009a), an artifice, a belief without understanding. In his essay, *The Prevention of Literature*, Orwell (1946b) warns that "a society becomes totalitarian when its structure becomes flagrantly artificial." The supremacy of economics over politics can be illustrated by the fact that the belief in vocational education transcends the political spectrum here in Canada. Trevor Norris (2014) notes that philosophies of both the Left and Right can betray humans as economic creatures. The education policy initiatives proposed by Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP Party are framed as making higher education more affordable to increase job opportunities in a global economy (Ontario NDP, 2014). Similarly, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party state that

> a twenty-first century post-secondary education system must meet the needs of a twenty-first century economy. The make-up of our higher learning system in Ontario must reflect the requirements of the jobs of the present and future . . . to reflect economic realities. (Ontario PC, 2014)

Consumerism becomes the magical means in our institutions of higher education. Tal Gilead (2012) argues that since the 1960s, human capital theory has provided the basis for the material objectives of educational attainment in the broader economy. This theory is the mechanism by which neo-classical economics infiltrate the institution of higher education: students are treated as economic investments. Acemoglu and Autor (2011) argue that a significant disadvantage of this approach is *unobserved heterogeneity*,

which is the presumption that all differences among students, such as educational attainment, post-graduation employment, and job satisfaction, can be attributed to the acquisition (of failure to acquire) quantifiable skills (p. 3). As consumers with apparent freedoms, students are led to believe through the rhetoric of human capital that their success or failure in the institution rests on them alone. While it is dehumanizing to treat humans primarily as gears in a greater economic machine, reducing education to a functionalist model solely to serve existing economic needs, it also dangerously ignores and fails to take notice of existing power structures that replicate existing social inequalities. If students fail to contribute to the economy, they are led to believe they have only themselves to blame. This force of individualization, whereby individuals are more frequently required to construct their own identities, is discussed in-depth by Bauman (2001) in *The Individualized Society*. This mantra of late modernity becomes a secular theocracy. Hedges (2009a) abhors economic theories that perceive humans as simply objects whose worth are determined by the market, when they no longer recognize that they possess a "sacred dimension." He says, "in America most human beings have been conditioned to view themselves as marketable commodities. They are objects like consumer products. They have no intrinsic value". The corporate educational model sells itself as amoral, and, therefore, absolves itself of any moral consequences that follow from it. Students learn to write in stock phrases and clichés, to write scientifically and avoid moral inquiry. Hedges (2009b) calls this the language of television, and argues that "the culture of illusion thrives by robbing us of the intellectual and linguistic tools to separate illusion from truth" (p. 45). In a system whereby humans are considered commodities, we are used and discarded without being given the means to articulate

dissent. Arendt's (1998) cognizance of world alienation and collective anxiety becomes usurped by "the cheerful conformity" of Hedges' (2009a) empire of illusion.

In this chapter, I have outlined the moral repercussions of various forms of secular faith to demonstrate how any belief without understanding can be dangerous. In an educational context, I termed this a *secular theocracy based on a progress theology*, and it is an inversion of the traditional dogmas of religious rhetoric in three ways:

1. It purports itself to be amoral.
2. It purports itself to be rational, based on scientific knowledge.
3. It dehumanizes the individual (in Christine doctrine, although the human is made from ashes, he is paradoxically the centre of the universe, so there is narcissism along with flagellation).

Religion does not hold a monopoly over the transcendent. As Wolin (2008) states, we must not underestimate our desire for credulity. Our economic models of human development, our need to increase capital, are constructions which have become perceived as ineffable nonconstructions of human organization. So much scientific theory, the rhetoric co-opted by economics, seems incomprehensible to us, so we retreat from the public realm and place more faith in our illusions of democratic freedom as consumers within the social. We convince ourselves that principles of reductionism do not degrade the sanctity of human life, yet moral nihilism is at the heart of corporate culture, and by proxy our educational culture. We have cast off the exigencies of religious instruction, and, thus, any inquiries of moral import are subjugated to the margins of academic respectability along with the other humanities-oriented disciplines. We continue to fall victim to the immoral repercussions of an education system that cares

not for democratic participation, but only satisfying the needs of our political institutions in bed with the corporate oligarchy. In our deluded state, we tout the freedom of a consumerist model of higher education, one in which we believe gives more freedom to the individual but instead robs us of the tools to protest. We manufacture a secular theocracy to cope with the anxieties and fears prevalent in a world in which a degree credential has less and less social capital and fails to guarantee us a meaningful and well-paid career after graduation. If we continue to choose belief without understanding, if we do not challenge the uncontested axioms of corporate educational models, we will continue to be haunted by those ghosts of dead religious beliefs without even knowing it.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSION

This thesis is a warning to those institutions of higher education that continue to devalue the arts and humanities, for these disciplines can undermine the doctrines of modernity and thus threaten the political status quo of the institution's authority. Of course, science and economics, for instance, can adopt arts- and humanities-oriented approaches. True scientific inquiry demands creativity, critical thinking, and the questioning of all our epistemological assumptions. Marx was an economist. However, with the continued entrenchment of neoliberalism and scientism in educational policy, the political nature of such questioning is more necessary than ever, and so all the disciplines must equip themselves with this task.

We must be wary of any educational approach which justifies itself primarily as modern, for modernity is a construct, and, therefore, it has the potential to be appropriated as a totalizing discourse. I am not advocating a historical regression, nor am I nostalgic for a time and place now forgotten. In fact, I am advocating to continue the process of modernity: to keep criticizing by turning inwards at modernity's tenets themselves. The uncontested supremacy of scientific, technology, and economics, the central tenet of modernity, can lead us back upon superstition, myth, and pseudo-theology. Like the ouroboros, modernity, after questioning the tenets of organized religion as witnessed by the Enlightenment project, must question itself. This is the value of modernity, not a blind insistence upon progress. It is too easy to rely on scientific assessment, for instance, as a means to avoid the messiness of moral discourse. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, morality can never be completely avoided. Teaching without an awareness of this can lead to indoctrination. As discussed, we must interrogate even

the fundamental values of modernity in order to make them relevant to us, to keep them current. If we do not hold them up to the mirror of reality they can become archaic, left to petrify like material once organic, and, as a result, may no longer reflect out new social paradigms. If so, they must be abandoned or else we betray the necessity of critical inquiry we profess to hold central to secular education. If not, we are engaged in religious instruction, merely indoctrinating the secular theologies of our time, and, thus, the myths of modern education will continue to perpetuate unimpeded with the force of theocratic coercion.

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